This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

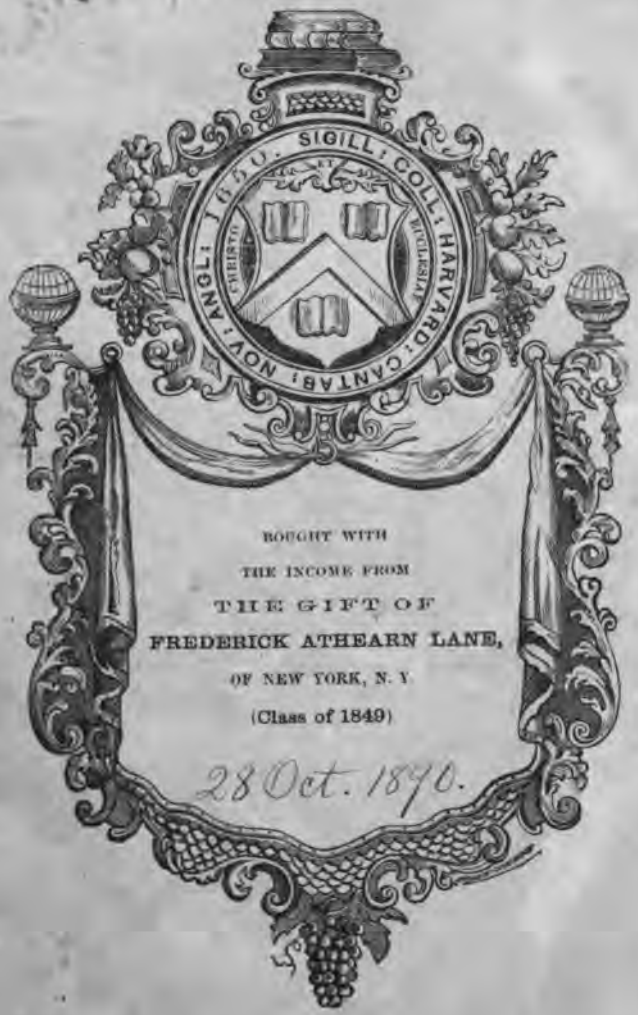
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Two Summers in Greenland

Digitized by Google

Geog 5838.90



BOUGHT WITH
THE INCOME FROM
THE GIFT OF
FREDERICK ATHEARN LANE,
OF NEW YORK, N. Y.
(Class of 1849)

28 Oct. 1870.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TWO SUMMERS IN GREENLAND.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

DISCO FJORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

TWO SUMMERS

IN

GREENLAND

AN ARTIST'S ADVENTURES

AMONG ICE AND ISLANDS, IN FJORDS AND MOUNTAINS.

BY

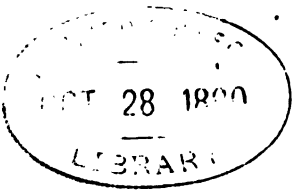
ILLUSTRATED.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL,
LIMITED.
1890.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

Digitized by Google

4337.17
Geog 5838.90



Crane Fund.

Digitized by Google

TO

T. A. D. JENSEN, K.D., ETC.,

CAPTAIN IN THE DANISH NAVY,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE PLEASANT DAYS SPENT IN HIS COMPANY

IN THE SUMMER OF 1884, WHEN HE LED A

SURVEY EXPEDITION IN

GREENLAND.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

PAGE

What induced me to visit the home of icebergs, and why my experiences have been published—Hans Egede and the Eskimos—Discovery of Greenland by Gunbjörn—Settlement by Erik the Red—East and West Bygd—Bjarni Herjulfson went to drink yule-tide ale, and came in sight of new lands—Leif Erikson called them Helluland, Markland, and Vinland—Thorwald went farther south and was slain in battle—Thorfin made new discoveries and traded with the natives—Greenland settlers kept trading-posts in Vinland—The bard Helge of Brattelid—Leif embraced Christianity—Thiodhilda built the first church—Bishop Arnold persuaded the Greenlanders to swear allegiance to the King of Norway—In the year 1266 explorers reached 75° 46′ N. lat.—In the year 1235 seal-hunters erected a cairn, with Runic stone, in 73° N. lat.—The last ship to Markland—The colonies became neglected—The men acquainted with Greenland navigation were murdered in Bergen in 1448—Expedition for rediscovery despatched from Denmark in 1579—John Davis landed in Greenland in 1585—Failure of an expedition in search of silver mines—No ancient record of the first Eskimo invasion—Norse records of the destruction of the West Bygd—An Eskimo tradition of the final extermination of the Norsemen—Hans Egede landed in Greenland—The King of Denmark granted an annual sum, and commenced a trade to support Egede's mission xiii

CHAPTER I.

In spring, when the birds wander north, I accept an invitation to join an expedition and follow them—Heavy weather in the North Atlantic—One of the party taken sick and dies—A burial at sea—Approaching Greenland, we meet the *John Franklyn* and hear news—Winter and its long days—Flocks of birds and the first iceberg—Kayak-men pay us a visit—Arrival of the pilot—The anchor is dropped 1

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

PAGE

Holstenborg—The colonies—Snowstorm and frost on Whit-Sunday —A colonist explains how a year passes for Europeans in Greenland—Improvidence of the natives—Scotch whalers and American fishermen—The church and the wooden buildings of the Danes—Eskimo buildings and their inhabitants—The girls dress for a ball and catch cold—We put on *ski* and ascend a mountain —A crew is selected—Yearly income of a Greenlander—Laws and municipal council 16

CHAPTER III.

We leave Holstenborg and go to the islands—The weather improves rapidly—A rotten hide in the boat splits—Ivar's tent—We get another boat—Sarfanguak—A seal-catch—Grand ball—A boy drowned—The island of Nepiset—Floating fat—The station of Ivtitlik and fjord of the same name—Flowers—A reindeer hunt and a feast afterwards—Birds' rock—Ikertok fjord—A salmon river—Aggressive mosquitoes—The inland ice—A deserted village—Carolus—The angmaset—Return to Holstenborg—Our men meet their sweethearts 33

CHAPTER IV.

Off to the south—Stopped by bad weather—The shoals and Andreas Olzen's landmarks—Salmon-fishers—A suggestion of Valhalla —Station of Kangamiut—South Ström fjord—Wild mountain scenery—A grave—The landscape changes its aspect—Shoals in the fjord—We wander inland for three days and reach the inland ice—Mads—The reindeer hunting grounds—Strange appearance of the soil near the ice—Signs of prevailing south-east winds—Jensen goes to a *nunatak*—Whortle-berries—We return to our tent—Other parts to the north of the fjord are explored—A native clergyman—The coming winter casts a shadow before it —A magnesia lake—Farewell to South Ström fjord 51

CHAPTER V.

On the coast—A fight between a fox and a falcon—We return to Kangamiut—Tales of winter life—Our crew gives a ball and prepares to go home—A boat is hired to take us to Sukkertoppen, where a fresh crew is engaged—Great catch of salmon—We enter Eternity fjord—Grand surroundings—Kayakers are sent to tell us to return—All hands "splice the main brace"—The Venice of Greenland—Mary Magdalena and Habakkuk—The reason why Claus Skifte left his native isle—Eskimo superstitions—The fox and the goose embark with us—We reach Copenhagen safely .. 70

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

PAGE

Off to Greenland again—All birds do not travel safely—The *White Bear* is presented at the capital of Greenland—Good seal-catching—Early spring—A Moravian mission—Early Moravians and Dr. H. Rink's remarks on them—The Holstenborgers disturbed in their sleep 88

CHAPTER VII.

I meet old friends—Pay a visit to Sarfanguak—A Greenlander who is too soft-hearted to strike a seal—Ivar's tent—Beautiful scenery—Scotch whalers—A sailor's funeral—I go north with an anthropologist—We camp at Ukivik and cross North Ström fjord—A walrus embedded in ice—Strangers—A man who had lost his nose and one hand by frost-bite—Aito and its outposter—A town that lived half a year on a dead whale—Sad cases of men crippled by exposure—Kangitsiak—Why the dogs were so thin—Egedesminde—North Greenland does not follow the fashion of the south—The outposter on Dog Island, who for fifty years had not seen five of his countrymen at one time—Anthropological studies are sometimes difficult in Greenland—The black spot—Eskimo names for other nations—Ikamiut—Growth checked by starvation—Suicide—Among the Christianshaab—Dog disease—Warm winds—North Greenlanders proud of their winter—Claushavn 103

CHAPTER VIII.

Jakobshavn ice-fjord—Sword-fish—I am troubled by mosquitoes—Disco-land as a barometer—The Rev. Mr. Rasmussen and his servant Godman—Greenlanders travel out to see the world, and I go with them—The island of Tusak—Kittiwakes and puffins have taken possession of the lands—Godman relates his hunting adventures—Kronprins's Islands—We cross Disco Strait and reach Godhavn—Trap mountains—Walrus-hunt in the harbour 124

CHAPTER IX.

Native opposition to the inspector's authority—I let slip the opportunity of returning home by the steamer—Disco fjord—Interior of Disco-land is unexplored—The natives at church—The ceremony of rubbing noses is abandoned, and that of hand-shaking not quite established—We return to Egedesminde, where a brig is waiting for the arrival of Dr. Nansen—Mr. Meigaard—We pass Green Island and come to Claushavn—A strong current

Digitized by Google

PAGE

—The cause of the current and its results—Our crew find no place like home—Klokkerhuk—Fine sport with ptarmigan and eider-ducks—In a dense fog we reach Ritenbenk—The Waigat and Tesketok ice-fjords—Krikkertak—A grand dinner in Sarkak—Difficulties caused by ice—The first snow and the September moon—Read Bay—An iceberg gone to pieces 137

CHAPTER X.

Wonderful story of mirage and of a large animal—Akugdlet, whence explorers were sent in search of Nansen—Already very cold on the inland ice—I pass the islands again and find most birds gone—A sledge ride at Egedesminde—Remarks on the Eskimo dogs—Tales from the extreme north—Hostile demonstration in Upernivik—A benevolent Greenlander—Bear-hunting in winter—A woman supposed to have been devoured by bears—Footprints of unknown animals—A *savset*—Seals come up to bask in the sun in the month of May 153

CHAPTER XI.

My impressions of Greenland and its people—Their life and industries—Musically gifted—Danish endeavours to cultivate the natives on an Eskimo basis—An express from Akugdlet announces that Nansen has not arrived—I embark and go to sea—"A life on the ocean wave"—We knock about for three weeks in Davis Strait; in two weeks we reach the North Sea, and undergo three weeks' buffeting by the waves—Drop anchor in the roads of Copenhagen 171

Digitized by Google

FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
Disco Fjord	*Frontispiece*
Aurora Borealis	8
Kayakker in High Sea	14
Our Skin Boat under Sail	32
Ivtitlik Fjord	42
Carolus' Hut	48
Among the Outer Islands	52
A Suggestion of Valhalla	54
The Inland Ice with a Nunatak	64
A Lake in the Snow-Free	66
The Clergyman's Tent	68
A Native Greenlander	72
Rowing Women	76
The Stag's Horn by Godthaab	92
Eternity Fjord	96
Scene in Eternity Fjord	100
A Native Nurse	104
A Bird Rock	114
Winter Hut by Egedesminde	116
Stranded Icebergs in Jakobshavn Fjord	124
Godman	126
Godhavn	136
Station in Disco Fjord	138
Jakobshavn	142
Ritenbenk	144
Krikkertak Ice Fjord	146
Station of Krikkertak	148
Egedesminde	158

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

NORSE RUIN. (After Groth.)

INTRODUCTION.

What induced me to visit the home of icebergs, and why my experiences have been published—Hans Egede and the Eskimos—Discovery of Greenland by Gunbjörn—Settlement by Erick the Red—East and West Bygd—Bjarni Herjulfson went to drink yule-tide ale, and came in sight of new lands—Leif Erikson called them Helluland, Markland, and Vinland—Thorwald went farther south and was slain in battle—Thorfin made new discoveries and traded with the natives—Greenland settlers kept trading-posts in Vinland—The bard Helge of Brattelid—Leif embraced Christianity—Thiodhilda built the first church—Bishop Arnold persuaded the Greenlanders to swear allegiance to the King of Norway—In the year 1266 explorers reached 75° 46′ N. lat.—In the year 1235 seal-hunters erected a cairn, with Runic stone, in 73° N. lat.—The last ship to Markland—The colonies became neglected—The men acquainted with Greenland navigation were murdered in Bergen in 1448—Expedition for rediscovery despatched from Denmark in 1579—John Davis landed in Greenland in 1585—Failure of an expedition in search of silver mines—No ancient record of the first Eskimo invasion—Norse records of the destruction of the West Bygd—An Eskimo tradition of the final extermination of the Norsemen—Hans Egede landed in Greenland—The King of Denmark granted an annual sum, and commenced a trade to support Egede's mission.

It was from a desire of becoming personally acquainted with the Polar zone that I went to Green-

Digitized by Google

land. It was but natural that I should be full of anticipations, and equally natural that at first I often felt disappointed. I soon, however, discovered that my labours were amply recompensed by what I saw, the novelty of which often impressed me strongly. Since my return, many questions have been asked me with regard to the climate and the people of that land, proving that but a little real knowledge of the subject exists, in spite of the great attraction to the mind of Polar lands in general. I therefore venture to place my experiences before the public, hoping that my shortcomings as a narrator may be excused, and this book received for what it is—not a scientific work, but as the mere impressions of a man who for two summers wandered over many parts of the Greenland coast, and whose main desire was to see the landscape and depict the effects of colour and light with the truthfulness felt by every artist possessed of regard for Mother Nature.

Everybody knows the name of Greenland, but comparatively few are acquainted with the fact that there is to be found in it a population of Eskimos who have been under the influence of Christianity for more than a century, differing in this respect from the Eskimos of other parts, who, with a few exceptions, still are heathens. This leaven of Christianity is the result of a single pious and energetic man, who went to Greenland to preach to the descendants

Digitized by Google

of Northmen supposed still to inhabit the country. This man came to love the heathen Eskimos so much that he resolved to stay with them, regardless of privations and danger. He succeeded in persuading the Danish Government to assist him, and inspired others with a desire to follow him. Surely Hans Egede deserves to be included among the heroes of the world. Many have made sacrifices for their own nation or race. He settled among degraded savages. Many have gone to preach among savages in other parts—some sent by a mighty and ambitious Church, others actuated by a pure enthusiasm for the Word of God; but few have experienced the hardships and difficulty of this man. What had finally become of the ancient Northmen has never been ascertained. Their ruined houses and churches may still be traced; and it is not unlikely, as claimed by some, that they were extirpated by the Eskimos.

The following historical remarks are chiefly compiled from Dr. H. Rink's work on Greenland :—

We learn from the Icelandic sagas of a certain Gunbjörn who, driven westward by storms, had there seen an unknown land. A few years later, another Icelander, Erik the Red, started on an expedition in search of this new land, which he found and explored. He stayed two winters in it, and gave many places names. The third summer he returned to Iceland, and called the new country Greenland,

Digitized by Google

"because much people will go thither if the land has a fair name." He succeeded in collecting and manning twenty-five ships, of which, however, but fourteen arrived; the rest being either lost or compelled to put back. This first settlement is supposed to have taken place in the year 986.

The new-comers divided the land between them and formed two settlements—the East Bygd and the West Bygd; the East Bygd being the largest. Among the settlers was a man by the name of Herjulf, who had a son, Bjarni, of a roaming disposition. Having won both riches and esteem at an early age, Bjarni fitted out a vessel and made a voyage every other winter. On one occasion, when he came home, he found that his father had gone with Erik. He at once put to sea again to follow the expedition, saying that he intended to continue his old habit of spending every other winter with his father, and to drink the yule-tide ale with him, as had been his wont since a boy. The fact that none of the party had ever been in the Greenland sea was a matter of little concern to him or his crew. They started with a favourable wind, but a dense fog arose and concealed both sun and stars, so that they did not know whither they went for many days. At length they sighted land, but Bjarni said it could not be Greenland. They sailed close up to it, and found it to be without mountains, only exhibiting small heights covered with trees.

Digitized by Google

Steering onward for two days more, they again came in sight of land, which was flat and also well wooded. The sailors insisted upon landing; but Bjarni would not consent, and sailed north, with favourable winds, for three days, when he a third time beheld land, which looked barren and full of glaciers.

Once more he put to sea, the strength of the wind soon compelling him to shorten sail; but after the lapse of four days he again saw land, when his crew asked him whether he believed this to be Greenland. He answered, "It appears most like Greenland, according to what I have been told concerning it, and we will try to land." They did so, and disembarked on a promontory which they found to be the very spot where Bjarni's father lived, and there he took up his abode with him.

The news of Bjarni's adventurous voyage soon reached Iceland and Norway, creating a great stir; but people wondered that he could have been so devoid of curiosity as to have omitted to set his foot on any of the new places which he had discovered, and that he had nothing at all to relate about them.

The first expedition in search of these new countries issued from Greenland, and was planned at Brattelid, the name of Erik the Red's settlement. Erik's son, Leif, bought Bjarni's ship. Erik himself reluctantly consented to undertake the leadership of the party. In riding, however, to the fjord from his

Digitized by Google

house, the horse stumbled and he had a fall. Accepting this accident as a bad omen, he said, "It will never be my lot to discover any other land than the one we are now in possession of, and we shall henceforth make no more voyages together." He thereupon abandoned the command to Leif, who sailed with a crew of thirty-five men, all told. They first came to the coast which Bjarni had seen last, and, mooring their vessel, went ashore, but found the land a plain with flat stones without any grass, and some distance inland mountains covered with snow. They called the country Helluland.

Again they made sail, and after a time came to another coast, where they also landed. The country was level and covered with wood. They called it Markland. Making no stay there, they continued their voyage, with a wind from the north-east, for two days more, when they came to a third land.

Here they found themselves at the mouth of a river, sailing up which they came to a lake, where the country was so pleasant that they resolved to take up their winter quarters there. They built large houses, and Leif so arranged that, while some remained at home, others explored the surrounding country, always using great circumspection, and not separating from one another, or going out to a greater distance than enabled them to return home by nightfall. They found an abundance of large salmon and an exuberant vegetation.

Digitized by Google

Leif had a servant, or thrall, a German by birth, who had been with him from childhood, and was much devoted to him. He was found missing one day when a party returned home, and Leif immediately sent explorers in search of him. He was soon found, but in a state of perfect intoxication. When sober enough to tell what had happened, he related that he had found grapes, which he at once recognized owing to having been born on the Rhine, and had partaken of them, not wisely, but too well. It must be remembered that the author of the saga was not of the crew, and had never been to Greenland, or countries beyond. Being an Icelander, it is not to be wondered that his knowledge of the character of the grape was imperfect, and that he might believe the unfermented juice of wine to be intoxicating. At all events, grapes were discovered in abundance, and Leif called the country Vinland. The next year he returned to Greenland with a cargo of timber and grapes.

The next expedition mentioned is that by Lief's brother Thorwald, with the same ship and thirty men. It is supposed to have taken place between the years 1002 and 1005. He stayed at Lief's house in Vinland, and explored the country without seeing any inhabitants; but next summer he went further south, where he came to a flat promontory which looked very beautiful, and was all covered with forest. Down on the sandy beach he discovered three skin

Digitized by Google

boats, and three men in each of them. They at once gave chase to the strangers, and succeeded in catching and killing eight of them; one, however, escaped and disappeared in the interior of the fjord. Soon after an immense crowd of skin canoes appeared and begun a battle with the ship, in which fight Thorwald was killed with an arrow. His men stayed one more winter in Vinland, and next year returned to Greenland. Here, again, we may believe that the author has confused the skin boats of the Eskimos with the birch-bark canoes of the North American Indians, as there is no other record of Indians having used skin for boats, nor of Eskimos having lived so far south. A study of the sagas has led to the conclusion that Vinland was Connecticut, and the flat lands, with the sandy beach and the fjord, may consequently have been on the borders of the Hudson or Long Island Sound.

Two years later, a rich and active man, Thorfin Karlsefne, came from Norway to Greenland, where he married a relation of Erik. He sailed with one hundred and sixty men, and came likewise to Helluland, Markland, and Vinland, and made many discoveries. He began trading with the natives, selling cloth for fur, and was on friendly terms with them until some misunderstanding arose and an encounter ensued, ending in a murderous fight. Karlsefne returned from Vinland to Greenland in 1011, and after that time the Greenland settlers con-

Digitized by Google

tinued to have in Vinland outlying colonies which were visited on trading voyages, but they never retained possession of them for any length of time, most likely on account of their scanty number and the hostility of the natives.

From the first century of the Norse settlements of Greenland, we have interesting records of some distinguished chiefs, giving detailed accounts of the life of the settlers, but subsequent to the death of the illustrious chief and bard, Helge of Brattelid, in 1070, the tidings from these colonies suddenly became rare.

Leif spent a winter with King Olaf in Norway, and was converted to Christianity. He returned with a priest and some clerks, but Erik showed no disposition to embrace Christianity, and called the priests "evil men." His wife, Thiodhilda, however, was baptized, and built a church at Brattelid, where she often went to repeat her prayers, and the people of Greenland soon adopted the Christian faith.

The first bishop sent by the pope was Arnold, in 1126. In 1261 a bishop came out from Norway, and he persuaded the Greenlanders to swear allegiance to King Haken Hakensen, from which time Greenland, from being a republic, became subject to the Norwegian Government. Of about the same date is an interesting account of an exploring expedition to the farthest north. It is related to have been made in the year 1266, and the detailed state-

Digitized by Google

ments lead to the conclusion that the explorers had passed through Lancaster Sound into the inlets of the Arctic archipelago, and reached a latitude of 75° 46′.

It is stated that the colonists used to carry on seal-hunting in the northern regions, which assertion is confirmed by a Runic stone found in a cairn on a small island in about 73° N. lat. The stone was presented to the Museum of Northern Antiquaries in Copenhagen. It has been read and interpreted by George Stephens as follows:—"Elling Sigvarthson and Baane Tolarson and Enrithi Osson on the Saturday before Gang Day * raised these beacons (landmarks) and ridded (made this clearing) 235 (= 1235)."

During the fourteenth century periods of several years often seem to have passed by in which no ships at all came from Greenland to Norway. In the year 1347 one ship arrived which had also visited Markland. This is the last trace of ancient communication between Scandinavia and the American continent. During the period subsequent to the year 1349, when the plague or "Black Death" broke out in Norway, the far-off colony was still more neglected. In 1379 it is said that the western settlement was attacked and destroyed by

* Gang Day, Rogation Day, or St. Mark's Day, is the 25th of April. In 1235 St. Mark's Day fell upon Wednesday. The previous Saturday was April 21.

Digitized by Google

Eskimos, and that the Northmen were thenceforth confined to the southernmost part of the country. A document of the year 1409 has been preserved, containing a wedding contract of a young Icelander who married during a visit to Greenland. It was drawn up in Garde, in Greenland, by the vicar of the bishop. In all likelihood none of the bishops appointed to Greenland after that time ever set foot in that country. The last titular Bishop of Greenland died in Denmark in the year 1540.

After the year 1409 the tidings grew more and more rare and obscure. In 1432 a treaty was made between England and Denmark, according to which the English king promised that such people as had been carried off from Iceland and other northern countries should be sent home after having been duly paid compensation. Also a brief, written in 1448 by the pope to a bishop in Norway, indicates that people had been carried away in thraldom by ships from the British Islands, where the pestilence had caused great decrease in the population, and where labourers were sought for from such northern countries as had escaped the general calamity. The brief treats of the pitiful condition of the inhabitants of Greenland, who thirty-two years before had been attacked by a hostile fleet. The invaders had laid waste the land, and carried off people of both sexes into captivity. Many of the captives had come back and rebuilt their houses,

Digitized by Google

but, being without priests, they had to perform long and troublesome journeys in order to repair to those whom the barbarians had spared.

In the fifteenth century communication still seems to have existed. There has been found an old historical notice which tells us that in the year 1448 there lived in Bergen forty men who were acquainted with the Greenland navigation, and used annually to bring home precious cargoes from that country. On returning that year, they were asked by some German merchants, who resided in Bergen, to sell some of their wares, but they declined to let them have any. The Germans then took revenge by murdering them during a banquet. From this moment, it is said, it became impossible to sail for Greenland, because nobody knew the course thither.

In 1579 and 1581, the first expeditions were despatched from Denmark for the re-discovery of Greenland and the resumption of trade with its inhabitants. It seemed to have been a firm belief that people of Norse descent still lived there, but so totally had the knowledge of the colony been neglected, that these expeditions only tried to reach the east coast.

It was John Davis who, in the year 1585, when in search of the North-West Passage, discovered the strait named after him, and, following the west coast of Greenland, succeeded in landing there in about 64° N. lat., where he entered a fjord and

Digitized by Google

bartered with the natives. An expedition sent out by King Christian the Fourth of Denmark, in 1605, brought home some silver ore, and the king, in the hope of acquiring a lucrative colony, levied a special Greenland tax throughout his dominions, and equipped the next year no fewer than five ships for an expedition, chiefly with the aim of mining silver ore; but the result was utter disappointment, and no further mention has been made of any silver mines.

The East Bygd is reported to have had eleven or twelve churches and one hundred and ninety villages or farms, while mention is made of only three or four churches and ninety farms in the West Bygd. Many ruins have been discovered, but, as the dwellings and also many of the churches may be supposed to have been built of wood, it is not strange that the ruins of all have not been traced. A contemporaneous record written in Norway runs thus :—"The people of Greenland are obliged to import a great many things from other countries, such as timber for their houses, as well as iron, whereas they, on the other hand, export sheep-skins, ox-hides, seal-skins, tusks of walrus, and rope cut out of their hides. Some of the richest persons have made the experiment of sowing corn, but the people in general have no idea of bread, and have as yet never had the sight of it. There are, however, to be found pretty good pastures, and

Digitized by Google

there are also fine large farms on which the owners keep plenty of cows and sheep, and prepare a good deal of butter and cheese; from this produce a great part of their means of sustenance is derived, as well as from all manner of game, such as the flesh of reindeer, whales, seals, and bears."

When the hostile invasion of Eskimos which finally conquered the Norsemen commenced is not mentioned in any of the Icelandic authors. The first settlers found traces of Eskimos, proving them to have been there before, and when they afterwards appeared in small numbers they seem to have lived on friendly terms with the Norsemen for a long time. The renowned Icelandic author, Are Torgilson, who lived from 1068 to 1148, in his book, "On the Icelanders," writes as follows:—"The land called Greenland was peopled from Iceland. . . . They" (viz. Erik the Red and his companions) "found there, in the eastern as well as in the western tracts, human dwellings as well as fragments of boats and articles wrought of stone, giving evidence that the same race of people as those inhabiting Vinland, and whom the Greenlanders" (viz. the settlers) "called Skrellings, must have roamed about there." The author adds that his information has been gained from Thorkel Gellerson, a distinguished Icelander, who, on a visit to Greenland, happened to meet and have some conversation with one of the companions of Erik the Red.

Digitized by Google

The expedition of 1266 was mainly sent for the purpose of tracing out the dwelling-places of the Skrellings. A Norwegian, by name Thorgil, a friend of Erik, in attempting to reach the East Bygd, was driven on shore by gales on the east coast, and was three years among the glaciers, ice-bergs, and floe ice before he came to Brattelid. The saga tells of his having met natives on that coast. In one place he surprised two women carrying bundles of flesh away from a drift-whale, and in another his boat was stolen by natives, but finally restored to him.

In the sudden attack, reported in the sagas to have been made by Skrellings, on the West Bygd, eighteen men were killed and two boys carried into captivity. When this calamity was made known in Garde, in the East Bygd, a man named Iver Bere was despatched thither, but he found the colony deserted and only a few head of cattle left, which he carried along with him on his return.

When the country was rediscovered no others than the present Eskimos were met with; but in the southern districts many individuals were found, exhibiting a complexion and also a frame of body which seemed to indicate an intermixture with Europeans. An ancient account makes mention of certain Christian Greenlanders, who, in the year 1342, fell off from their own religion, consorted with the Skrellings, and adopted their mode of life.

Digitized by Google

Only a few traditions about the ancient Norsemen have been preserved among the Eskimos. According to the most popular of these, an Eskimo who lived upon one of the islands visited the Europeans, whose settlement was at the interior of a fjord, and wantonly killed one of them. From this murder a warfare arose between both parties. Winter having set in and the sea being frozen over, the Europeans attacked the Skrellings and gained a complete victory. While all the rest were put to death on the spot, two brothers fled. They were pursued by the chief of the Norsemen, called Ungertok, who overtook and killed one of them, whereas the other, Kaissapee by name, escaped. Kaissapee travelled about among his countrymen, engaged companions, and procured an enchanted arrow and a boat of so peculiar a construction that he was enabled to make it assume the appearance of a piece of ice. By means of this stratagem they surprised the Norsemen, set fire to their houses, and killed the whole of them excepting Ungertok, who made his escape and afterwards wandered from one place to another in search of a safe refuge. Kaissapee, however, continued the pursuit until he succeeded in killing him with the enchanted arrow.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century Hans Egede was the clergyman of a small congregation in a remote part of Norway. He seems to have lived in ignorance of the latest discoveries in

Digitized by Google

Greenland, and still believed firmly in the existence of the two settlements. The news of a certain Captain Monk having come to Denmark made him believe that they were still of the popish persuasion, and the thought of those poor people who had not had any pastor for two centuries left him no rest. He felt more and more convinced that it was the will of the Lord that he should go and preach the gospel to the neglected congregation. Many were the difficulties and hardships which he had to endure before he was enabled to carry his plan into execution. At length he succeeded in forming a company of certain merchants of Bergen who were willing to fit out two vessels for Greenland, and the king, approving of the plan, appointed him missionary and governor of the colony.

When he landed on the 3rd of July, 1721, with wife and children, he was astonished at the natives. He wondered how their appearance could change so greatly in a few hundred years; and their very language had altered so much that he could not understand a word of it. He seems to have been several years in discovering that they were people of a totally different race. The traffic was unprofitable, and when the company in 1726 had lost a ship, it became discouraged, dissolved partnership, and abandoned the whole undertaking. The Government was now obliged to succour the colonists by taking the sole charge of the trade, as well as by

Digitized by Google

supporting a mission. As the old settlements had not been found, they were believed to have been situated on the east coast, which could not be reached by sea on account of the floe ice, and in the year 1728 some soldiers, with twenty-five horses, were sent over to undertake an expedition by land; but the animals died, and when the explorers reached the interior they found it covered by one vast glacier.

Egede found some ruins of places where the ancient Norsemen had lived, and the Danish Government resolved to send out six families from Iceland for the purpose of settling in these ancient dwelling-places and trying whether they could prosper there. In the year 1730 a sufficient quantity of timber was despatched to erect houses for the new-comers, but in the following year the matter was cut short by the death of King Frederick the Fourth. His successor, Christian the Fifth, resolved to abandon both trade and mission in Greenland, and ordered the Europeans there to embark for Denmark, with the exception of Hans Egede, who was permitted to stay with as many of his companions as he could prevail upon to remain with him. For those an allowance of provisions for one year was granted; but no prospects of further aid from the Government were held out.

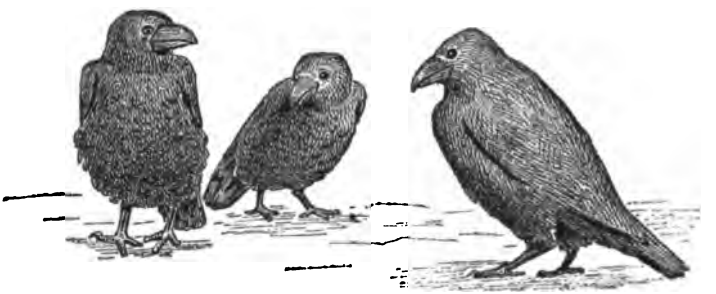
Egede persuaded eight men to stay with him, and wrote a letter to the king, in which he set forth the state of affairs, exercising all his eloquence in

Digitized by Google

an appeal to his Majesty's feeling, and soliciting him not to abandon his poor subjects, who tried to keep up the propagation of Christianity in this far-away part of his dominions. This letter proved decisive as to the fate of the colony. After having passed one year of anxious expectation, Egede had the joyful satisfaction of receiving news from home, with an announcement of the king's resolution to continue the trade on the Government account, and to grant a certain sum annually for the support of the mission.

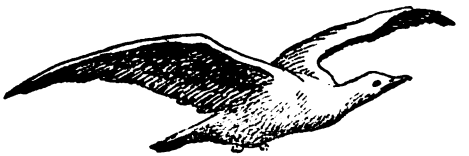
From that moment the European institutions in the country were provided for. Only two critical periods have since then threatened the undertaking with destruction, viz. a dreadful epidemic of small-pox in 1733–34, and an interruption of the intercourse with Denmark, caused by the war in 1807–1814. The trade was for some part of the last century made a private monopoly; but in order to maintain the commerce the Government was finally obliged to take it up, and since 1774 it has continued to be a royal monopoly. While the trade was commenced as a support for the mission, those two institutions have since been separated, and the mission is now a Government institution, subject to the Minister of Public Worship, by whom the missionaries are appointed and paid.

Digitized by Google



RAVENS.

Digitized by Google



GULL.

TWO SUMMERS IN GREENLAND.

CHAPTER I.

In spring, when the birds wander north, I accept an invitation to join an expedition and follow them—Heavy weather in the North Atlantic—One of the party taken sick and dies—A burial at sea—Approaching Greenland, we meet the *John Franklyn* and hear news—Winter and its long days—Flocks of birds and the first iceberg—Kayak-men pay us a visit—Arrival of the pilot—The anchor is dropped.

My connection with the Greenland Exploration Expedition of 1884 was sudden and unexpected. In the spring of that year I was at Copenhagen. My plans for the summer had been arranged; but as it often happens with plans that they are overthrown by unforeseen events, so mine were overthrown by an offer of joining an expedition to Greenland, whose object was to survey parts of that country, where as yet no European foot had trodden since the days of the ancient Norsemen.

One day, during a visit to our spring exhibition, I met Lieutenant Jensen, of the Danish Navy, who had executed extensive surveys in Greenland, and

Digitized by Google

especially made himself known by his famous wanderings over the inland ice to the *nunataks* (mountain-peaks surrounded by the inland ice; an Eskimo word, *numa* = land, and *tak* = resembling), which are called after him. Speaking of the expedition, he surprised me by saying, "If you like to join us, you must decide before to-morrow;" and as I hesitated, he added, "There is no time to be lost, as the vessel leaves the day after to-morrow."

The prospect was too tempting for me, especially as I had on more than one occasion used my utmost endeavours to find an opportunity of visiting the Polar regions in a way that might afford a favourable opportunity for my object of fixing the scenes on canvas; so I made up my mind in the same moment, and two days after, on Saturday, the 19th of April, at six o'clock in the morning, I found myself on board the brig *Lucinde*, in the roads of Copenhagen. She was one of the vessels belonging to the Royal Greenland Trading Company, and was bound for Holstenborg.

Our leader had arrived, as well as the other member of the expedition—a geologist by the name of Lorenzen—and it was not long before the anchor was weighed. A light breeze carried us past the forests of Seeland, which looked heavy and grey, without any indication of the coming spring. It would not fall to our lot to see them covered with foliage this year; but the expectation of coming events did not permit us to give a thought to such matters.

The day was clear and cold. Elsinore was passed

Digitized by Google

the same afternoon, our pilot left us, and soon the changeable winds carried us out of sight of land.

The first days on board ship are usually accompanied by a feeling of discomfort. We are torn out of our daily mode of living; are not yet accustomed to the routine of existence in a ship; "have not got one's sea-legs on," as the sailors term it; and, in our case, we had in addition to accustom ourselves to the sleeping-bag. It requires some practice before you get into the trick of creeping into it; but, after that is acquired, it seems to you to be the easiest and most convenient sleeping implement in cold weather.

On the Sunday we passed Anholt and the lightship *The Knob*. We came close under the coast of Sweden, off Fort Varberg, and that night we passed the Scaw. Monday brought Lindesnæs in sight, and we felt the first North Sea waves, which made the geologist somewhat sea-sick. The wind was favourable, and the cheerfulness caused thereby was not checked by the illness of a single person, an illness for which experience has taught us there is but one remedy, and that is, all-healing or all-destroying time.

A pair of grey clouds, looking like mere spots—the peaks of some old Norway rocks—were still visible on Tuesday morning; but they disappeared in the course of the forenoon, and an easterly breeze, with occasional snow showers, continued until Thursday, when we passed Fair Isle, between the Shetlands and Orkneys. We had scarcely passed to the westward of these island groups before the Gulf Stream

Digitized by Google

made itself felt by raising the temperature of water and air to 47·75 degrees Fahrenheit.

Our one patient was apparently better, although he complained of pains in the chest. Just because life on board is monotonous, one pays greater attention to the few things that happen than when on shore; and a sail especially is an event of great importance. We were in sight of a bark, whose course and speed were the same as ours—at least, on an average; for when we, during the day, had gained some eight miles on her, we constantly found her the same distance ahead of us next morning. "She is a fast night-sailer, and has a stolen cargo on board," was the superstitious remark of the sailors. Saturday brought us close to this comrade of the sea, and the signals were hoisted to ask where she was bound for. The reply came that she was a Norwegian, bound for Meramichi, New Brunswick.

On Sunday, the 27th of April, at noon, eight days after we had left home, we found ourselves on the meridian of the eastern extremity of Iceland; but the wind died away, while a heavy swell arose, which next day was followed by a storm, succeeded the day after by a dead calm. The wind appeared to have ceased for a while in order to invigorate itself; for it arose again with fresh strength, and brought squalls from the north-west down upon us.

"Icelandic produce!" said the seafarers, with an air of having cracked the same joke hundreds of times before.

The sea rose high, the greenish-blue waters being

Digitized by Google

striped with froth like veins in marble; the wave-tops, of a transparent green, curved themselves; the foam flew like snow before the winter gale; there was an accompaniment of claps of thunder and flashes of lightning; while the sunbeams, at intervals breaking through the clouds, produced the most fantastical effects over sky and ocean.

Friday, the 1st of May, the storm was at its highest. Every block whistled, and the ropes sang, while the water bubbled as though the whole sea were boiling. The *Lucinde* proved herself an excellent sea-boat, which, in spite of considerable "tumbling over the rough ground," as the sailors called it, bravely carried her main lower topsails during the very worst of the storm, and kept the after-decks dry. Only once a wave, towering above its fellows, came down on deck with a great noise; but it was powerless, in spite of its dreadful appearance, and did not succeed in doing any other damage than wetting two men to the skin.

Meanwhile poor Lorenzen became seriously ill. No one on board could with any certainty tell what was the matter with him; but as he on coming on board had complained of bronchitis, caused by the exertions of the last days on shore, it was supposed that he was suffering from inflammation of the lungs. The motion of the vessel left him no rest; his fever became high, and he raved continually. We hoped for a change of weather, but day followed day without bringing any; and the barometer kept on falling until the Sunday. The following night the weather cleared, but then the

Digitized by Google

strength of our patient was evidently spent, and on the 5th of May, towards evening, he died.

It had become a dead calm, and the barometer rose very high. The silence contrasted greatly with last week's bustle and exertions. The swell was slow and long, and the brig, not answering the helm, rolled from side to side, with her loose canvas flapping against the masts. The dead body was covered with a flag, and on the following Wednesday, when the wind was blowing fresh from the eastward, it was brought out and sewn up in a new sail, together with half a ton of coals at its feet. The flag was hoisted half-mast high and the brig brought to, the crew forming a group round the corpse on the starboard side of the upper deck. The captain stepped forward and read a prayer, while all heads were uncovered. The body was then raised over the rail and lowered into the sea, where it disappeared into the unknown depths, leaving a bubble behind, like a monument vanishing at the very moment of its completion. After a last look and farewell to our comrade, who, full of ambition, was so abruptly arrested in a career full of promise, the sails were refilled and the vessel resumed her course. Our manœuvres had attracted the attention of our companion the bark, who, thinking us in danger, made preparations to come to our assistance. So we made haste to hoist the flags for burial, which she did not seem to understand, but continued to stow her sails; and it was not before we were close enough to speak with her that she comprehended what had

Digitized by Google

taken place. That day was the last upon which we saw this friend; for now her course was more southerly than ours, and we soon parted.

There followed a time of fresh and fair wind, and on some days we made over one hundred and eighty miles, probably the greatest speed which can with any reason be expected from a vessel of the *Lucinde's* construction. We neared our destination so rapidly that, on the 10th of May, three weeks after leaving, we were on the fortieth degree of west longitude, only some twenty-eight miles to the east of Cape Farewell.

The colour of the sea changed strikingly from clear blue, which it had been for the greatest part of the voyage, to a muddy greenish grey. We now met with driftwood and saw the first Greenland birds. The observation on Sunday, the 11th of May, showed us to be on 44° 57′ west longitude. We saw that day the first iceberg and felt the increased keenness of the air.

The wind went round to an unfavourable quarter, and tried our patience the more severely as every day brought fresh evidences of our being near land and proved that we only had some six hundred miles left to accomplish. In these days of fast steamers, one is apt to become impatient on observing that day after day passes and there has been seemingly little or no progress. On the Sunday we had passed two icebergs of peculiar form, and on the Thursday we repassed them only a few miles from the spot where we had last seen them. But sailing with a contrary wind was not the

Digitized by Google

Lucinde's forte. She was best with a favourable and moderate breeze. Had she to sail against the wind, she would beat up as bravely as possible, and, after having sailed backwards and forwards for a week with all her sails spread and leaning elegantly over before the wind, she would very likely be found on the very spot from which she had started.

The north-setting current assisted both the *Lucinde* and the mountain ice, while our surroundings showed us various objects of interest. Thus the icebergs often resembled fantastical castles of the purest bluish-white colour, with towers and steeples split and half tumbled down, with porches and archways of clear blue and green hues, and with the sea roaring and foaming around them. We had a wonderful sight on Saturday, the 17th of May, when we crossed a belt of floe ice, by the Danes called *stor is*, as a contrast to the current of floe ice in Davis Strait, called the central pack or west ice. It appeared at a distance like a solid field of ice, but could from the rigging be made out to consist of broken-up pieces, and the *Lucinde* went her way between them without even touching the smallest fragment.

With a little imagination one could fancy one's self surrounded by the most different crystal objects; as a whale with lifted tail, tables, chairs, sofas, bears sitting down and stretching their necks according to bears' wont, the wreck of a vessel whose timbers and broken masts stuck out of water, large toadstools and many other equally peculiar forms, displaying intense blue and green colours compared to

Digitized by Google

AURORA BOREALIS.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

which the foam of the sea looks clayish; and with all this was a mystic half-ringing and half-murmuring sound. Sailors call this rotten ice, and tell about fields of it which have sunk all of a sudden. I never met any, however, who had witnessed the phenomena themselves. They had all heard it from others.

The flocks of sea-birds increased. They did not seem to be either so numerous or so varied as those I have seen off Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope. Here was the mallemoke or fulmer, the kittiwake, a small auk also called the rotge, the petrel or Mother Carey's chicken, and others. We saw whales, porpoises, sword-fish, and seals, and the nights were often illuminated by the Northern Lights, which, especially on the 14th and 15th, were brilliant and contained the whole scale of the rainbow colours, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet in broad stripes.

On Tuesday, the 20th of May, we steered towards land, and saw a sail coming out for a favourable wind. We ran close up under her lee, and found her to be the bark *John Franklyn* of Copenhagen, with a cargo of cryolite from Ivigtut, bound for Peterhead for orders. When our captain had asked her to take letters, and she had consented, there was a great stir. Everybody wanted to send a letter. Some had one already written, while others hurried away to scratch down a few sentences, for there was no time to spend on either long words or elegant handwriting. Both vessels were backed, and a boat from us was lowered while Lieutenant Jensen, with

Digitized by Google

four sailors, boarded the *Franklyn*. When they had returned and the boat was hoisted in, the sails were filled and the flag dipped three times in farewell.

The news received was that a belt of floe ice, some sixteen miles broad, surrounded the entire coast. The *Franklyn* had encountered great difficulties in penetrating it. Two American vessels for Philadelphia had had full cargoes for weeks, but had not yet been able to leave. An American vessel had been wrecked and the whole crew saved, while a Danish brig, the *Elna*, coming from Copenhagen for Ivigtut, had evidently been totally wrecked in the ice and lost with all hands. One of her boats and a board with her name had been found washed on shore.

Before we lost sight of the *Franklyn* it became calm, but during the night a breeze arose, increasing in strength and carrying us rapidly forward; but the glee caused by our progress was abruptly finished in the afternoon, when the wind grew so strong that we had to heave to, as our captain feared that higher up in the straits might be found floe ice, which might cause our destruction if we came in among it at high speed.

A couple of days later, when the wind had shifted to the northward, I came on deck in the morning and found the windows in the skylights frozen. The cold nipped ears and nose; snow lay thickly on the deck, water-casks, rail, and in the corners of the sails, which latter were fringed with icicles. It was a true picture of winter, which was so much more irreconcilable with the long days increasing in length

Digitized by Google

with each mile we advanced. We passed many icebergs, and they appeared to be larger the farther north we went.

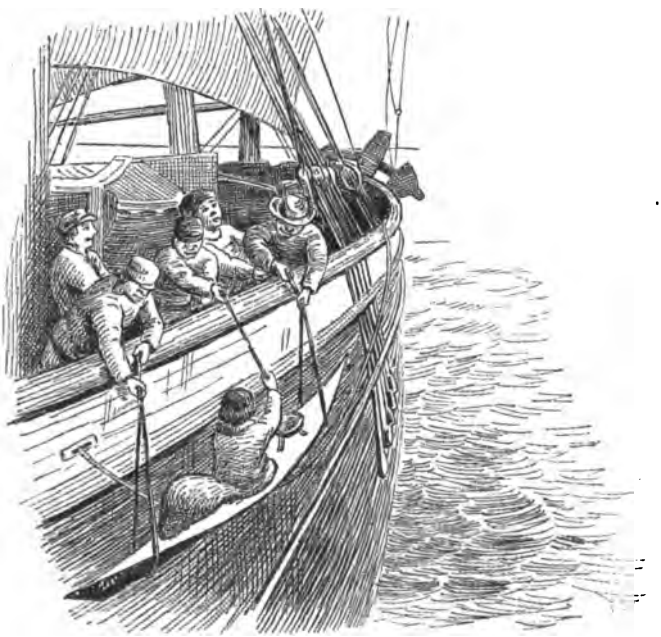
Saturday, the 24th, when we had been five weeks out, we saw Greenland for the first time, and beheld wild-looking mountains, covered from top to bottom with snow and ice. Clouds hung heavily over the sea, concealing the upper peaks from our view, but over the land the sun shone brightly, and only a single cloud cast a cold shadow on a certain spot, causing the rest of the landscape to shine all the more brightly. A greater contrast between the land and its name cannot be imagined, and my first impression was cold and repulsive.

It was the coast by Fredrikshaab that was nearest to us. Further north we could distinguish the ice-blink, as the solid inland ice is called, shooting out here to the very seacoast. There was frost in the air, but it felt nevertheless mild, when we on the Sunday found ourselves close under the coast near Godthaab. The clouds had ascended and the immense mountains stood out clear and sharp against the bright sky. Seals were sky-larking around us, while whales thrust their broad backs out of the water and quietly went about their business without being tempted by the merriment of others. The water was covered with flocks of birds, mostly gulls and auks, and occasionally there were to be seen small icebergs, with hundreds of terns resting or flitting about, all talking at the same time.

A stir was created when, just as we had placed ourselves at the dinner table, the look-out announced

Digitized by Google

two kayak-men, and, in spite of the importance of a dinner at sea—especially of a Sunday dinner—where appetite is sharpened by the pure air, together with the constant motion of the vessel, everybody left his seat to enjoy the sight of two men in skin boats. They were soon alongside of us, and were hoisted up, men, boats, and all, when the first thing



TAKING KAYAK ON BOARD.

they did was to free themselves from their frail skiffs. A third kayak-man followed, and as they promised to take letters on shore to go home by the trading vessel lying in Godthaab, there was no one who gave another thought to the meal. Everybody fetched writing materials, and for some time the

Digitized by Google

scratching of pens on paper was the only sound heard in the cabin.

Until Wednesday, the 28th of May, we continued to advance slowly by the aid of light southerly winds, the coast being in sight the whole time. Occasionally it would look quite near; but when we met icebergs of a couple of hundred feet high, and noticed how rapidly they had been left so far behind that they looked like little spots in the horizon, while the land had not changed appearance to any noticeable extent, we perceived how far away the shore was.

There was no more night. During the few hours the sun was below the horizon, it was completely light around us, and, as a rule, the sky and ocean were coloured with strong tints and exhibited picturesque effects. On the Wednesday we passed the Arctic circle and entered the Polar regions, where we were received by a vigorous gale, with snow showers, which compelled us to change our course to the westward, into the open strait. There we remained till next day at noon, when the storm had abated and the sky cleared. We saw land and steered towards it; and, after sailing a few hours, the officers could distinguish the two landmarks—the "Præstefjeld" and "Kjærlinge hætten"—and a short time after two kayaks were seen making for us.

It was a truly imposing sight to see those hardy fellows work their way against a swell, such as that which the previous day's storm had produced. One moment both man and kayak were hid from

Digitized by Google

our view among the waves; the next, the sharp stem of the boat cut through the crest of a billow, while the water dashed clean over the man. Then, poised on the top of a wave, he balanced himself with his short paddle like a rope-dancer with his pole. All this time he followed the brig, shouting directions regarding the manœuvring of the vessel, his boat now jumping over the waves, now sliding down their sides. The pilot-boat at length came in sight. It was a whaling sloop, with six rowers and a steerer, and soon came alongside.

The pilot, a tall, dark man, with the eye of an eagle, came on board. After having greeted the captain and given his instructions, he told us that they had had a severe winter. I noticed that he used the *w*'s, and put him down in my ignorance for a native of Yutland, and expected that his crew were Eskimos, but I found myself not a little disappointed by the looks of them as they one by one came up the side. There was nothing in the appearance of those people that showed them to belong to a race different to my own, only their language was unlike anything I had heard before. Some had dark hair, and others blonde; most of them had beards; and if some of them, on a closer inspection, showed traces of Eskimo descent, there was not a physiognomy with pure Eskimo features amongst the whole.

My next surprise consisted in seeing the snow stretching down to the water's edge, and the shore, bordered by solid ice, indicating the highest water mark. We were told that in the inner fjords the ice

Digitized by Google

KAYAKKER IN HIGH SEA

Digitized by Google

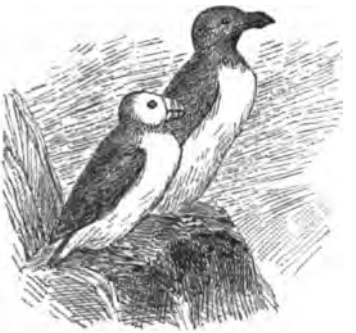
Digitized by Google

was still solid. January especially had been very cold, and open water had not been seen from the highest mountains. As a consequence, there had been great distress, and people had suffered much from want of food. Many footprints of bears and two bears themselves had been seen, but none had been caught.

We entered, threading our way among low reefs, a bay surrounded by lofty mountains; and on a plain, some fifty feet above the sea, we saw the settlement of Holstenborg. Our anchor dropped at eight o'clock, and thus was the voyage at an end, after a sail of six weeks less ten hours.

HOLSTENBORG.

Digitized by Google



AUKS.

CHAPTER II.

Holstenborg—The colonies—Snowstorm and frost on Whit-Sunday—A colonist explains how a year passes for Europeans in Greenland—Improvidence of the natives—Scotch whalers and American fishermen—The church and the wooden buildings of the Danes—Eskimo buildings and their inhabitants—The girls dress for a ball and catch cold—We put on *ski* and ascend a mountain—A crew is selected—Yearly income of a Greenlander—Laws and municipal council.

HOLSTENBORG is a trading station, here called a colony, and has, like the other stations, various trading outposts. Greenland is divided into two portions, South and North Greenland; each of them again into colonies, and further subdivided into districts. The two portions are severally superintended by an inspector, while a colony is governed by an agent, here called *colonibestyrer*, who again has his outpost traders or agents at the district stations. The agent is assisted by a clerk, sometimes by two clerks, called respectively assistant and volunteer. The inspectors are the superiors of all persons

Digitized by Google

belonging to the royal trade, and are moreover authorized to act as magistrates in general when doubtful questions occur, which have to be settled by the Government.

The colonies are—in South Greenland, Julianehaab, Fredrikhaab, Godthaab, Sukkertoppen, and Holstenborg; in North Greenland, Egedesminde, Christianshaab, Jakobshavn, Godhavn, Ritenbenk, Umanak, and Upernivik.

The spacious and safe harbour of Holstenborg is frequently visited by whalers and fishing-vessels, and has a sandy beach at the extremity, where vessels can be repaired.

The 1st of June was Whit-Sunday. The thermometer was below freezing point, the storm came in gusts between the mountains, white bees swarmed in the air, and the blinding white snow carpeted both hill and dale, except some steep rocks, and a few spots here and there, which the wind in the course of the winter has swept free as often as they were covered. We felt very comfortable indoors in the little wooden house, where a bright fire in the stove spread cheerfulness throughout the room. The place had been visited by one of the traders and a Scotch whaler this year, so we had scarcely any news to relate to the two Danes and their families, the only Europeans there, while, on the other hand, everything concerning them was entirely new to me. It seemed to have been a good many years since any clergyman had resided there, but a doctor paid a visit once every summer. It was a long way to Godthaab, where he lived, and during

Digitized by Google

the winter months there was no communication of any kind with neighbouring colonies. The principal mail for this year had been received. Time was too valuable to be spent in reading all the newspapers as long as there was any vessel in harbour, and this "ship-time" was altogether too noisy and excited to be agreeable. But when they were left alone and had their daily, regular work to do, then was the good season. I could not help thinking how dreary and dismal the winter must be, and said so, but was answered in the negative—"Not at all." Time passes quicker in Greenland than anywhere else. They knew that during the winter there was no one to disturb the peace, no possibility of visits from neighbours, nor letters from friends, so they felt satisfied with matters as they were. The newspapers would be run hastily over in the summer, and then be gone carefully through in the winter evenings. The season previous to Christmas was the worst, as it was generally followed by a low, depressed spirit; but no sooner did the days begin to lengthen than everything looked brighter, and people began making preparations for the next season.

The worst part of winter was to witness the starvation and general misery among the natives. Care had to be taken to keep them alive, and at the same time not to make them too comfortable, or the result very likely would be that none of them ever would try to lay in any more stores, which many now did, although seldom in sufficient quantity. Only a few were provident, and with these

Digitized by Google

there was never any trouble. They were people who had broken with the old traditions of dividing with their neighbours. They had profited by the lesson taught by the Danes, and by the principles which were constantly preached by the authorities of saving sufficient in the time when there was plenty. As a rule, the Greenlanders would listen to the advice given and acknowledge its wisdom, but the result was constantly the same. Year after year they would come home in the autumn with only a bag or two of dry fish for a large family, and some even without any. Some would say when fish was plentiful, "What is the use of taking any more trouble? We must only give it away to others;" or they would not cure any, but expect to be supplied by their neighbours. It was supposed that the American fishermen, who frequently visited the harbour in the summer months, had a decidedly demoralizing influence on the natives. The fishermen were great favourites with them, and never came into the harbour without having their decks filled with heads of halibut, which they gave away; and when a fishing vessel was expected, the hunters would not even go out, but preferred to beg a little bread from it. Many families did not leave the colony at all the whole summer when fishermen were about, and the result had been an increasing poverty, which threatened to destroy the entire population at an early date. Those who were in the habit of sailing out with the fishermen were worse off than any. They lost their skill in harpooning and seal-catching in general, and were, as a rule, utterly

Digitized by Google

destitute in the winter. Strong drink they were not known to get from the Americans, and there were no complaints of the captains. These, however, had but little authority over their crews, who seemed to make free with everything on shore, and would keep up dancing for a week at a time. The agent and his assistant were powerless against them, and had on more than one occasion been threatened with knives.

As for the Scotch whalers, there had never been difficulties of any kind with them, and they were always welcome. They generally took in a fresh supply of water, and then left after having paid a visit to the agent. There was a whaling crew in the station, but it was now a good many years since any whales had been caught. Formerly, when true whales were still plentiful, Holstenborg had been a good place for them.

The first year a Dane spent in Greenland was generally the worst. He or she was not yet accustomed to the idea of only receiving news from friends once a year. After a while that matter almost ceased to be taken into consideration. Then the most uneasy time would be when the annual vessel was expected; but after it had left, and you had heard from friends—heard all the principal news—and when you were left by yourselves without any possibility of meeting strangers, you settled down, content and happy with your daily work.

Mr. Mathisen, the agent, had come to Greenland in 1838, and had never been away from it. "Does he never long to see his native country again?" I

Digitized by Google

asked. No; he had not the slightest wish to do so, was the reply. Here he had always felt happy. He had almost forgotten what Denmark was like, and was sure he would feel out of place if he should go there. Here he had all his family around him except the eldest son, and it was much against his inclination that the boy had been sent away to school. Could any place be handsomer than Greenland? He was content to live here, and be buried here when he died.

The house where Jensen and I had taken up our abode was the missionaries' building. A clergyman was expected that year, but there had been no pastor for some time, and one of the native catechists read a sermon in the church every Sunday, besides acting as a school-teacher. There was in the place a neat wooden church, with a stove, an organ, and a large oil painting over the altar. The dwelling of the agent and his assistant was a spacious wooden house of two stories, and the store and warehouse, the school, and the carpenter's shop, were the other principal buildings.

A Greenland town is of singular appearance. At the first look one is inclined to see nothing but a collection of earth-heaps; but after a closer inspection one discovers walls, with a single window, and perhaps a stove-pipe protruding. The entrance is seen to be through a hole resembling a fox's earth, and we are almost compelled to crawl on all-fours along a lengthy passage before we reach the room—and, as a rule, there is only one room. Several houses at Holstenborg, however, have a sloping

Digitized by Google

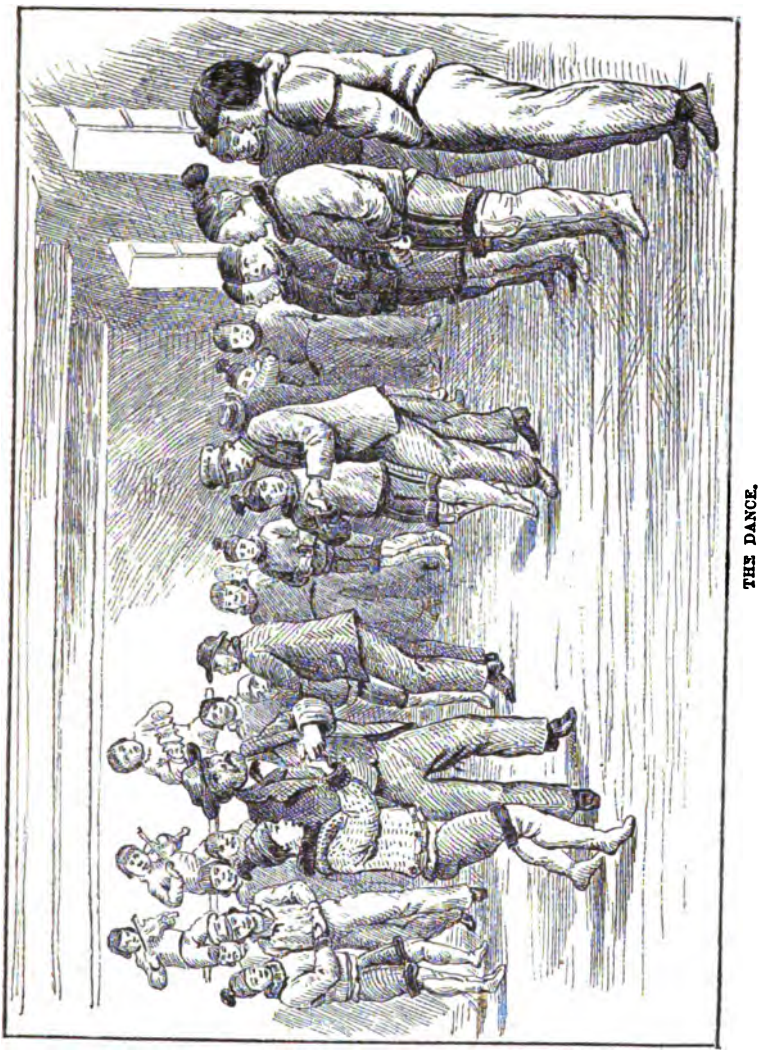
roof made of boards, including an attic, and windows in the gable ends.

The number of houses is about twenty for a population of more than two hundred. The snow had begun to get soft, while the refuse-heaps, which almost concealed some of the huts, and upon which some wolf-like dogs were looking for morsels of food, formed quagmires where one would sink knee-deep if one dared to cross them. In some places the mud filled the doorway.

It was a most striking sight, among all this dirt, to behold so many gaily dressed girls come forth to take a look at the new-comers. It was a gaudy crowd, with none but bright colours in the dress, consisting of a jacket, with fur trimming round the neck and bead embroidery over the shoulders, a pair of short sealskin or reindeer trousers, with two broad highly embroidered stripes in front, and white, blue, yellow, or red boots, reaching up to over the knee, fur trimmed, and also embroidered. The hair was fastened up in a knot with a ribbon, indicating the state of the wearer—being red for girls, blue for married women, black for widows, and green for those who were neither widows nor maids, or to use the words of Shakespere, "had a child to her cradle before she had a husband to her bed."

The red ribbons displayed the greatest elegance, while the blue showed a carelessness of outward appearance that made them repulsive. The entire dress had the appearance of being both becoming and practical, while the coiffure is about the very worst for the preservation of the hair. By being

Digitized by Google



THE DANCE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

firmly tied over the top of the head, the hair is dragged out on both sides over the ears, where all the women get bald places even at an early age, and come in time to resemble the bladder-nose seal.

There was a certain look of festivity in the crowd on the arrival of the brig, and happy expectations were marked on the faces of the young girls, the reason of which I discovered when in the evening I saw the *Lucinde's* sailors come on shore and make straight for the school-house, which in an instant was filled with young and old, women and men, all more or less spotted on their cheeks with dark scars from old frost-bites.

With the exception of three musicians—two violins and a concertina—the men were rather a superfluous element, for they were not wanted by the young girls, who now were supplied with Danish partners, who kept swinging them about to the tune of "O Susannah!" till late in the evening. Among the girls there were several of considerable beauty, and some were excellent dancers. These the sailors seemed to appreciate, as they never allowed them to sit down for an instant.

The proportionately small room soon became overheated by the crowd. Windows were opened, and the girls had frequently to step out of doors to breathe the fresh air, whereby some of them caught cold, which, as is well known, is contagious among Greenlanders and such Danes as have lived in that country for a number of years. The result was a regular epidemic of coughing the next day. Nearly

Digitized by Google

everybody coughed and had pains in the chest, accompanied in some cases with spitting of blood.

I had my first experience in mountain-climbing under difficulties caused by the deep snow which had begun to soften. It was the highest peak on the "Woman's Hood" which we ascended. To reach the foot of the mountain we had to cross some plains studded with lakes at the back of the settlement, and the *ski* (the Norwegian snow-shoe) was of great use. With its aid we easily crossed the plains, clambered up the hills, and gracefully slid down the sides of the latter—at least, the Greenlanders did. As for us, we stumbled, lost one ski and limped on the other, with one leg sinking to the knee at each step; or we tumbled into a hole, whence we saw one ski stuck at the top of the hill, while the other lay quietly awaiting us in the valley below. Such, at least, happened to me. We reached a point about two thousand feet above the sea, whence we looked over fjords and mountains, and after an absence of fourteen hours we returned to the colony, tired, exhausted, and with a pain in the eyes which lasted several days.

The expedition had been heard of before we came, and many had entertained hopes of joining us. Some had even borrowed money on the strength of it. Jensen had therefore no difficulty in picking a crew from amongst those who offered themselves. It consisted of a female servant—the widow Martha, who had been with Jensen before—two oarswomen, three oarsmen, an elderly steerer, and two kayakmen. Females are indispensable for travelling in

Digitized by Google

Greenland, to keep the boots in order. European boots are found inconvenient on the rocks, and the native kamiks want much looking after, and frequent repairs.

Our crew had each demanded ten krones (about 11*s.*) in advance, and consequently the shop did a brisk trade when all this money came back in small portions the next day. Coffee, sugar, rice, and tobacco were the principal goods in demand. If a Greenlander can buy a thing for a farthing, he will prefer to go four times to the shop rather than to buy a pennyworth at once. The people object to any paper being weighed, and therefore receive their goods loose, and I saw them take away hard bread, barley, sugar, pepper, and tobacco in the same piece of old cloth.

The opening of the shop is the event of the day, and is announced by the ringing of a bell. When opened, it is filled in a moment with as many spectators as customers. The goods are not displayed in any tempting manner, nor is there a great variety, but everything is extremely cheap, with the exception of hard bread. The reason of the dearness of the latter is said to be due to a desire on the part of the authorities to teach people to bake for themselves, for which they, however, have shown as little inclination as for improvements of any kind.

It appears, according to statistics by Dr. H. Rink, that each family of five members on an average has a yearly income of £8, and this is spent as follows:—

Digitized by Google

	£	s.	d.
Fire-arms, gunpowder, and lead	0	6	8
Other weapons and tools for hunting and fishing	0	3	1
House material and stores	0	1	7
35 yards of various dry goods, chiefly cotton ...	1	0	9
Other articles of dress	0	6	2
Domestic implements and tools	0	2	1
42 lbs. of coffee	2	2	2
188 lbs. bread	1	9	10
58 lbs. barley and peas	0	7	2
29 lbs. sugar	0	16	8
Other imported victuals	0	7	0
12 lbs. of tobacco	0	15	2
Various articles	0	1	8
Total	£8	0	0

What exists in Greenland of law, outside of the municipal council, chiefly consists of remnants of ancient laws and customs of the natives, with which the Danes have tried to interfere as little as possible. The following standing rules are still observed, although modified in some degree by contact with Europeans :—

When a provider, or head of a family, dies, the boats and tent, with the duty of provider, pass to the elder son, or, if there is no grown-up son, to the nearest relation, who then adopts the family of the deceased as foster-children.

Lost property is generally considered to belong to the finder. With regard to wrecks this principle has not been maintained, but goods from such wrecks, or stranded goods in general taken by the natives before the authorities could seize them, have mostly been recovered from the holders by a low payment. The right of driftwood is made good by the finder

Digitized by Google

carrying it above high-water mark and putting stones upon it. If a seal, after having been harpooned, makes its escape with the harpoon in it, it becomes the property of the finder, if the bladder has become detached, but the weapon still belongs to the proper owner.

All animals which, on account of their size or from other circumstances, are rare at the place where, or at the season when, they happen to be captured, are especially considered common property, generally only the head and tail being reserved by the hunter for himself. As regards the largest kind of whales, which were formerly considered common property, certain restrictions have been made when they have been captured by the help of boats and implements belonging to the royal trade. Drift-whales, although taken possession of by the officials of the trade, are nevertheless considered the property of the natives who take part in cutting them up, inasmuch as full pay is usually given to them for the blubber and the whalebone. If a man happens to lose or injure tools or weapons which he has borrowed from another, he is not generally considered bound to make compensation for the loss or damage which he has caused the owner.

The municipal institutions came into force in 1857 for the southern, were extended in 1863 to the northern district, and were adapted to both of them by regulations issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs in February, 1872. The chief points are as follows:— Twenty per cent. on the amount paid annually by the trade for produce purchased within the confines

Digitized by Google

of each chief station is handed over to "The Greenlanders' Fund" or "The Municipal Fund." The council of each chief station consists of the missionary as president, some officials of the trade and mission, and a certain number of representatives elected by the natives at the rate of about one to one hundred and twenty persons. Only clever kayakers are eligible, or men who have been so, and have abandoned seal-hunting merely from bodily infirmity. The natives cannot appeal to the council except through their representative or guardian (*parsissok*). The council has two meetings every year, and the discussions are held in the Eskimo language. Two kinds of aid are supplied by the fund—assistance to people whose poverty is evidently caused by their own idleness and negligence, and assistance to a more deserving class. The relief to the poor is given chiefly in the shape of tools and clothes.

In the spring the accounts are made up, showing the balance from the last year, of which the greater part is distributed among the providers who have received no aid at all from the fund. The guardians divide them into three classes according to their ability, and their shares are proportioned accordingly. It is also the duty of the council to investigate crimes and punish the offenders, to settle litigations, and divide inheritances. The council imposes fines for smaller offences, while more serious cases or crimes are reported to the inspector. In cases of high misdemeanour corporal punishment may be applied. Whether this institution has been

Digitized by Google

a success has been doubted, and few Europeans that I met had any confidence in it.

The weather was constantly improving, and our preparations for putting to sea were approaching completion, while we busied ourselves with climbing all the highest hills in the neighbourhood. We had hired a Greenland boat, by the Danes called a "woman's boat," in contrast to the kayak, which is rowed by a man. It is a very lightly built,

SEALS.

flat-bottomed boat, some thirty-five feet long, covered with sealskin. It carries six thousand pounds with great ease, and is light-rowing; but only before the wind is the sail of any use. On a small mast, in the very bow, a square sail may be hoisted. As the wind frequently blows either straight out of, or into the fjords, it is frequently of excellent service. In the construction of the boat no nails are used. The framework is joined together, and lashed to the thwarts with strong cords of hide; and only the sail, which formerly was formed out of seal membrane, is now made of cotton. In these waters, where the depths generally are too great for

Digitized by Google

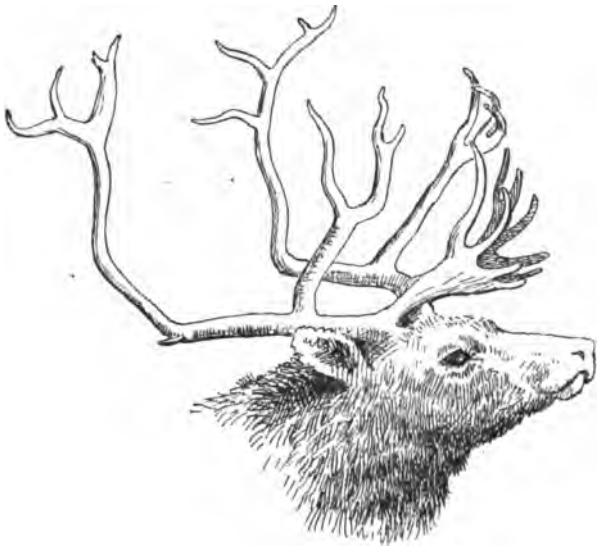
anchoring, and where there are but few sheltered bays, it is a useful boat, being easily taken out of the water and carried. Its great inconvenience is that it must be taken out of the water to dry, and be greased with blubber at least once a day. On a sandy beach, with surf, it suffers by being landed, therefore landing in such places is avoided as much as possible; and its worst enemies are sharp rocks and ice.

Digitized by Google

OUR SKIN-BOAT UNDER SAIL.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



REINDEER HEAD.

CHAPTER III.

We leave Holstenborg and go to the islands—The weather improves rapidly—A rotten hide in the boat splits—Ivar's tent—We get another boat—Sarfangunk—A seal-catch—Grand ball—A boy drowned—The island of Nepiset—Floating fat—The station of Ivtitlik and fjord of the same name—Flowers—A reindeer hunt and a feast afterwards—Birds' rock—Ikertok fjord—A salmon river—Aggressive mosquitoes—The inland ice—A deserted village—Carolus—The angmaset—Return to Holstenborg—Our men meet their sweethearts.

On the 8th of June we had finished our preparations. The boat was laden, and we rowed out of the harbour with fine weather; while the cannon from the *Lucinde* roared over the surface of the sea, the echoes reverberating from mountain to mountain till they died away in the distance.

During the first few days, we kept among the

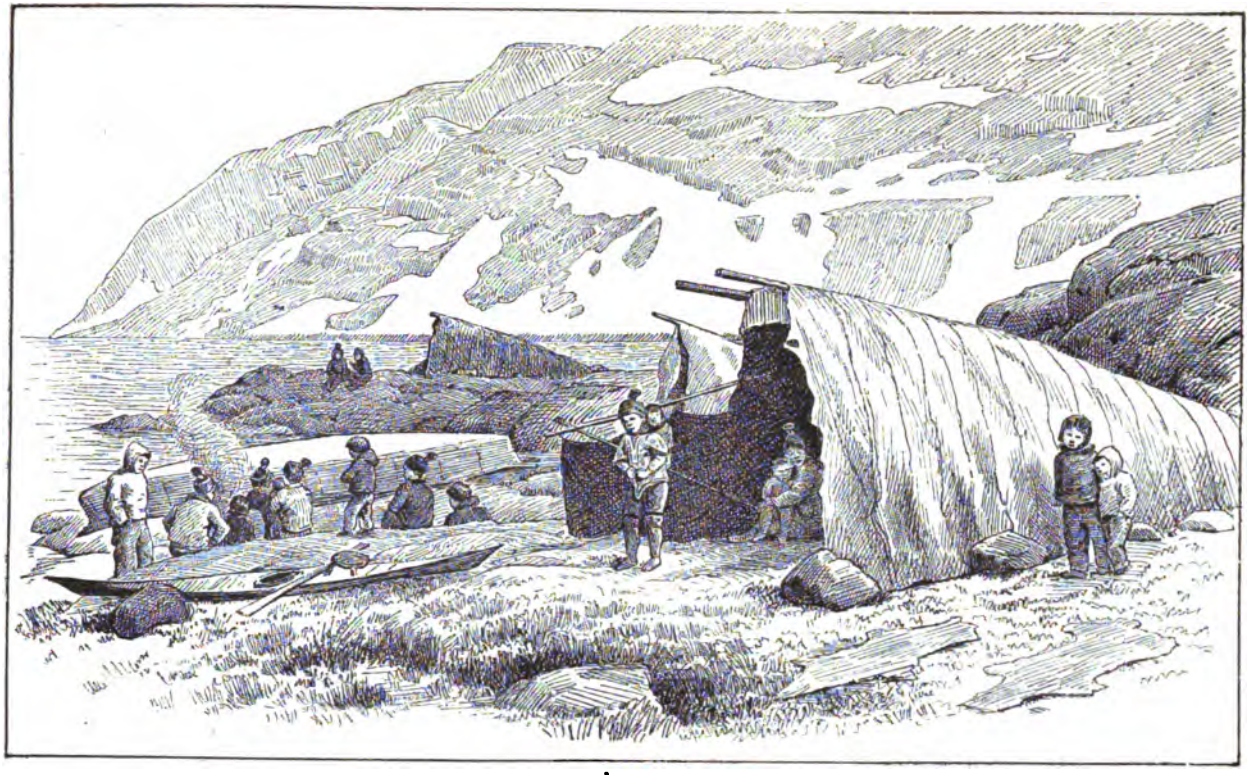
Digitized by Google

outer islands at the entrance of the fjord, and met with much snow everywhere. As a rule, the day breeze died away in the evening. The sky was clear, and the mountains far and wide reflected themselves in the calm surface of the sea, from which now and again a seal thrust its head out, or a flock of birds, in a long line, flew low over the strait, just touching the water with the tips of their wings.

When the day's work was finished and the tents erected, the women would light a fire of heather, driftwood, or some other material, everywhere found close at hand. A man went out in a kayak, and soon returned with a load of fish; another took his gun, and brought back a sea-bird, a hare, or a ptarmigan (*ryppe*); and while the meal was being cooked, the men seated themselves and commenced a song, a hymn, or a Danish melody with Eskimo words.

We had been two days out when, on returning from an expedition, we found the boat with a large rent in her bottom. In trying to launch it, one of its old skins had split; and we praised our fortune that it had happened on land, and not in the fjord, which is very deep. A kayak was despatched to a man whose tent was some four miles from where we stood, and the hole was repaired so far that we could row across to him. For the repair of damaged skins, the women always carry the necessary needles, sinews of reindeer, and skin, and are even able to mend a rent while sailing.

Digitized by Google



IVAR'S TENT.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

We found the tent on a promontory on the south side of the Amerdlock fjord. The man's name was Ivar, an able hunter; and his tent showed that the family was well off. Even a clock that ticked was not wanting. Meat and fish were spread on the rocks to be cured by the sun, and sealskins were stretched on the grass to dry. The wife, an active woman, looking the very picture of contentment, expressed her regrets at not having known of our arrival earlier, that the boys might have had their new *anoraks* (blouses) on. Close at hand there were erected two more summer tents, more picturesque than Ivar's, but without its snug and clean appearance.

Groups of people, each with a fire, surrounded the dark tents with a bluish smoke, on a foreground of rock, heather, and dry coarse grass, against a background of a bay fringed by mountains, whose peaks reached the clouds. Large parts of the hills were covered with snow, and a bustling rivulet emptied its waters into the fjord over rocks and ice. We succeeded in persuading Ivar to exchange boats with us, as his had new skins and was, like all his goods, of the best quality.

We reached a few hours later the termination of the Amerdlock fjord, where is situated the outpost station Sarfanguak, some twenty-five miles east of Holstenborg. The "outposter" was a Greenlander, by name Holger Olsen; and the population is upwards of two hundred, a large one for this country; but the spot is a good sealing and fishing place. A strait leads into the much larger neigh-

Digitized by Google

bouring fjord to the south, the Sherlok, which we saw from the top of a mountain was still covered by ice in the interior regions.

In descending we witnessed a seal-catch. Two kayakers followed a saddle-back. The one struck it with his harpoon, and threw the bladder attached to the latter overboard. The seal was not able to draw it under water, and both men followed quietly until the seal came up to breathe, and was killed. The harpoon was then withdrawn and the hole stopped with a wooden bung, lest the animal should become full of water and thus be too heavy in towing. When we came down the seal had already been brought on dry land. The women, whose function it was to cut it up, had begun work with animation, and all the poor and ragged children crowded round; while the dogs kept in the background, well knowing what would happen to them if they fought for the remains, and licked up the blood before the butchering had been completed and the carcase taken away. The children were first provided for. A pair of strips, some two inches broad, were cut from the belly. These were divided into bits, some four inches long, of skin and blubber, of which each child had its piece to suck and lick as though it had been a sweetmeat. While some hairs were spit out by the mouthful, others found their way into the stomach, together with the fat.

In the evening there was a dance in the attic over the warehouse, and I noticed our men playing a part similar to that of the Danish sailors in Holstenborg, being the favourites of the even-

Digitized by Google

ing. They also looked, with a single exception, superior to the Sarfanguaks, both in stature and features. There were fewer traces of European descent here than at the colony, and the pure Eskimo type, which strongly resembles the Chinese, was frequent.

I made use of the night to paint, and did not fail

HEAD OF A GIRL FROM SARFANGUAK.

to collect a crowd of admirers around me. A woman was especially loud in her praises of my art, and when I asked the son of a Dane who had followed us from the colony what she said, I was answered that she praised the fine colours on my palette, and declared that she had no doubt I would even be able to paint her boots. The following morning I was awoke by hearing a chorus of loud

Digitized by Google

lamentations in a house close by. A boy had in the early morning fallen from a rock and been drowned. According to ancient custom, the women had assembled to howl over the dead body. When the boy was pulled up he was already cold. Lieutenant Jensen had been called, but his exertions to restore life had been in vain, and it was doubtful whether life might have been restored if the proper means had been applied at once, but of such attempts the Greenlanders are ignorant.

It had been our leader's plan to go through the strait into the Ikertok, but this intention had, on account of the ice, to be abandoned, and our course was set for the outer coast, where the land was more covered with snow, but where, on the other hand, the water for the greatest part was open. Every day told on the snow, although the thermometer was under freezing point as long as the sun was below the horizon. Wherever a piece of ground had been freed of snow and ice, we found ripe crowberries (*Empetum nigrum*) in so great a number as almost to blacken the ground. Ripe, half-ripe, and green berries, all were to be found growing on the same branch and in the same state as that in which they were when buried by the snow the previous year. I fancied their taste to be better than that of those produced by other countries.

On Monday, the 16th of June, we were detained by a snowstorm on an island called Nepiset, and had for the first time to keep to our tent. We found a number of Eskimo houses in ruins; in these the ribs and jaw-bones of whales had been used instead

Digitized by Google

of wood. Close to our tent were the lower stone walls of a building, one hundred and eight feet long, which was supposed to have been a blubber store once upon a time, and to have been burnt down by Dutch whalers a year after its erection. There were many Greenlanders' graves on the island. The bodies, doubled up, with the face on the knees and the heels bent under, in accordance with old custom, had been placed on a high prominent rock, and merely covered with large flat stones. We also found two graves of Europeans which our steerer, a man who had formerly been harpooner to a whale-boat, declared contained the bodies of two English whalers. While in these waters our crew was constantly on the look-out for a remarkable coagulated oily substance which is occasionally found floating hereabouts. It resembles a white soft fat or grease, is met with in lumps of different sizes, and, after having been boiled and cleared, it has proved saleable like the fin-whale oil. In the year 1854, not less than twenty-four thousand pounds of it were purchased. The origin of this curious product has not as yet been ascertained.

When we resumed our voyage we passed by the outpost station Ivtitlik, consisting of a storehouse and shop, a dwelling for the outposter, and a few turf huts. The outposter here was a native, named Jakob Dahl. The salmon fishery had commenced, and we were able to procure some fine fresh specimens, and we also took a pilot for the fjord from which the place derives its name. Coming in there, we one day camped on the sunny side of a place

Digitized by Google

where the mountain sloped gradually to the water, forming a plain. A stream intersected it, running in one place through a birch forest, the trees of which were some six feet high. Moss, lichens, and heather, sprinkled with yellow and red flowers, covered the ground, while the mountains on the south side of the fjord were steep and snow-covered, and, in the clear bright atmosphere, were reflected by the water. Snow was only found at a few spots on our side, but evidently it had not been long gone, and a vigorous greensward sprinkled with flowers was to be seen, in spite of a comparatively low temperature. Vegetation is perhaps more assisted by the intense light, lasting both night and day, than is generally supposed. On places where a little mould existed this was still frozen some two or three inches below the surface, yet the flowers blossomed on top. It had scarcely left off freezing at night before the mosquitoes came forth from the pools where they must have been frozen the whole winter.

The camp was one fine morning aroused by the cry of "*Tutu!*" (reindeer). One of the men had espied two of these animals some eight hundred feet up among moss and rocks, where they looked like a pair of stones, if indeed the naked eye could discern them at all. Half an hour after the departure of all who had rifles, one reindeer was slain, and the other was pursued for an hour before it disappeared.

I am unable to imagine the Greenlanders reaching a higher state of festivity than that to which they attained on this occasion, when the animal had been cut up and carried down to the camp. The tallow

Digitized by Google

IVTITLIK FJORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

and the marrow of the bones were the first things devoured, all in a raw state, and without any bread. The whole day was spent in carving, boiling, and eating. When a man could eat no more at one spell he would lie down to sleep, and begin his meal again the instant he awoke. Even at night the Greenlanders stopped up to boil and eat. I saw

CUTTING UP THE REINDEER.

them carefully take out the paunch and let blood run into it to mix with its contents, but I did not see them devour the half-digested moss and lichens it contained, which I had been told were considered a great delicacy. Nor was the paunch brought down to camp. To my question whether it had been eaten, the reply was the evasive one that no one cared about it; from which I concluded that they were

Digitized by Google

ashamed of showing their inclination in that direction to a European, and that it had been taken away secretly, or else eaten on the spot.

From a mountain peak some four thousand five hundred feet high, we had a fine view of the opposite hills, and beheld a landscape both grand and wild, with steep cliffs, glaciers with moraines, and snow. We surveyed the fjord to its termination, where it ended in two large clay plains. Of these, one especially looked as though it had been formed by the hand of man, resembling gigantic docks or fortifications, and, while the surrounding hills were sprinkled with green and brown vegetation, the plains themselves were completely barren. A couple of days previously, two kayakers had been sent on an errand to Holstenborg, and they met us on our way out. They were immediately asked for news; and when they reported that two American fishing-vessels had arrived, our crew broke out into loud cheers. "People sell their skins to the Americans," our servant explained. "They are treated with so much rum that they are drunk every day." We came back among the outer islands, where eider-ducks and gulls had commenced to build their nests, and it was striking to witness to what an extent the former had been pursued. It will evidently not be many years before eider-ducks, which up to the beginning of this century formed one of the main articles of export, will have become a rarity in spite of the numerous hatching-places. Gulls preserve themselves better, as they build on steep inaccessible cliffs. We passed two such bird rocks.

Digitized by Google

On the one there was also the cormorant and the burgomaster. A pair of eagles soared in the air above. The gulls, however, were not disturbed in the least by them; whereas the appearance of a single falcon was sufficient to drive every one of them away from its nest, and they poured out from the rock not unlike a snowstorm.

When the ice which we had seen from Sarfanguak on the inner Ikertok had disappeared, we entered that fjord. We first explored the northernmost of its three branches, where we found a handsome plain some sixteen miles long, intersected by a river, which we followed, encountering a few difficulties from floating pieces of ice coming from some lakes still partly frozen. One evening we camped where a weir had been constructed by salmon-fishers. Remains of camps were numerous hereabouts, with places for smoking the fish, and horns of reindeer lying about. Two of our men went to the river with their harpoons, and returned shortly after with sufficient fish for all.

The river had cataracts impassable for the boat, therefore it had to be carried overland as far as they extended. We had only come twelve miles when we found it impossible to navigate any further on account of the ice and rocks, which, in the strong current, threatened to cut the skins of the boat. The plain surrounding us was as level as the surface of the water, and but a foot or two higher than the ice on the lakes. Some spots were covered by vegetation, but on others the grey clay was quite bare, and other places again were covered by

Digitized by Google

a substance resembling snow, which on a closer examination proved to be saltpetre.

We had been told of an ancient Norse ruin in this neighbourhood, where, according to our crew, a grindstone and other implements had been seen, and they showed us where they would probably be found. The place looked a likely enough spot for Norsemen to take up their abode in, for there was a fjord and a salmon river, bordered by grassy hills; but all our endeavours to find any traces of buildings were in vain. For the first time we were seriously annoyed by swarms of mosquitoes, and not even when we climbed the somewhat lofty mountain in the neighbourhood did they give us any rest. We reached an elevation of four thousand feet above the sea, and saw from there the hills diminishing in height towards the east. The plains continued, intermixed with lakes; and some thirty to forty miles away was the inland ice, while a few nunataks (mountain peaks) were near the shore.

On our way into another of the branches of the fjord we landed one day on a promontory, where we found a deserted village. The houses stood with everything in them. There lay also the skeleton of a kayak and a dilapidated wooden boat. According to the report of our crew, the inhabitants had been driven away by starvation in mid-winter. Most of them had gone to Sarfanguak, and only a single family had wandered over the ice in a south-easterly direction.

Two days later, while sailing with a favourable wind, one of our men sang out, "Tent! People!"

Digitized by Google

Such an event had only happened a few times during our long wanderings, and we were curious to learn who the strangers were. The kayaks were sent off; and when they returned, after a couple of hours, we were informed that it was the family which had wandered inland from the deserted place which we had seen. In April they had killed two reindeer, and later a porpoise, of which they still had some left. They had no boat, but only two kayaks.

After having surveyed the third branch, which, like the two others, terminated in plains and was very shallow, we returned and pitched our tent near the place where these people lived, and had an opportunity of seeing them ourselves. The family consisted of a man, Carolus; his wife; a grown-up daughter; two sons, of whom one was ten years of age; and an elderly unmarried woman. They had built a small turf hut, but the old maid slept in the open air between some flat stones, raised on end and covered by a reindeer skin. Coffee, tobacco, and such other luxuries they had not known for many a long day, but the absence of them did not seem to affect their happiness.

Carolus was a man of few words, which was likewise the case with the other members of the family, with the exception of the old maid, who never ceased talking all the time we were there.

"Have they but one dog?" I asked one of our men; and the reply was that the others, belonging to the team, had been eaten during the time of starvation. Contentment was seen on all faces, which was very comprehensible, as it now was fine

Digitized by Google

weather again, and provisions were plentiful. The surrounding rocks were all covered with angmaset, drying in the sun. The angmaset is a small fish of the salmon order, which at times is found in great numbers. It is in Norway called the lodde. For the first time I wished that I could talk the Eskimo language, that I might have heard Carolus tell his own story.

Once more the fjord was visited, and we then returned to the outer islands. Various circumstances compelled us to go to the colony; and on the 10th of July we arrived once more at Holstenborg, and found a Danish gunboat lying in the harbour. We had expected that some of our crew would have become tired of roaming about by this time, and would give notice of leaving on reaching home; but such was not the case. On the contrary, they were all anxious to stay with us, even the two kayak-men, who were skilful hunters, and might have done well as their own masters. The secret of this was, that those who were able to maintain themselves had joined us for the sake of raising sufficient capital to settle down and marry. Although the young men met their sweethearts, and everybody knew of their engagements, they never spoke to, or looked at, them. One of the oarsmen, named Noah, was engaged to our very large and strong oarswoman Elizabeth, who had wound a black ribbon, with red flowers, round her hair-knot, not for the sake of colour only, but because she by this sign wished to show that she had no objection to marry again. Those two never let

Digitized by Google

CAROLUS' HUT.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

others see that they really were fond of each other; and when I once asked Noah when he would marry, he looked down and said, "Please don't make me so ashamed of myself." Our stroke, Jokose, was a singular curly-headed Eskimo, who had met by chance his intended bride staying with her family in a summer tent. How his and her secret love had been discovered is a puzzle to me, unless by their extreme shyness of each other. Everybody knew of their engagement, yet when he met her, not only did he abstain from speaking a single word to her, but he even went the opposite way when he saw her coming.

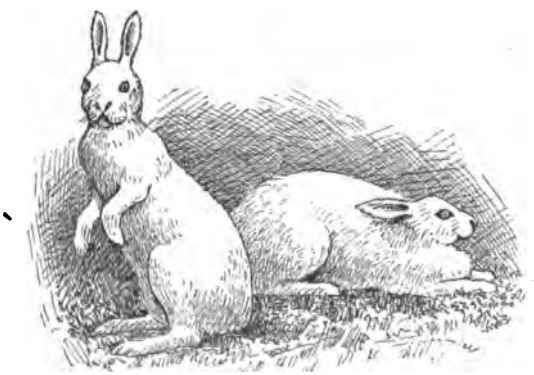
The wages of the crew were not so very large, being only a krone a day (about fourteenpence) for a kayaker, the same for the steerer, and seventy-five öre, or about elevenpence a day, for a rower, man or woman, besides coffee, bread, barley, peas, and ammunition. As for meat or fish, they had to procure that themselves, and whatever they sold us was paid for at the ordinary price.

We had, so far, been favoured by the weather, and had only encountered snow or rain a few times, and then but for half a day at a time. Light breezes had been common, and the air had generally been dry, with a refreshing temperature of seven or eight degrees of Reaumur (= 47·75° or 50° Fahrenheit). But twice had the thermometer showed 14°, but then it was calm. A cloud covering the sun makes a great difference, even on the brightest summer days; and although the nights have been as clear as the days, they were always chilly. Nay, until within the last two weeks, water-pools were, as a rule, frozen in

Digitized by Google

the morning. By those curses of an Arctic summer, the sanguinary mosquitoes, we had been tormented twice; the day by the frozen lake being the worst, every sting having left a lump. In expressing my astonishment at their number, I was told that it was very little compared to what we might expect in August, by which time, however, we intended to be in South Ström fjord, where they are said not to be numerous—for what reason I am unable to tell. At the worst they only appear during calm, warm weather. With an overcast sky, or a light breeze, they vanish like a dream.

Our excursion had been a succession of enjoyments. Our very way of travelling had been so attractive, that I failed to imagine a pleasanter manner of spending a summer. We camped wherever we liked, and where we could find sufficient space for the tents, and we had no fear of fevers from sleeping on the ground. We had never been troubled by neighbours; nay, we met surprisingly few people, and weeks had passed during which we had seen no one.



HARES.

Digitized by Google

GOOSE.

CHAPTER IV.

Off to the south—Stopped by bad weather—The shoals and Andreas Olzen's landmarks—Salmon-fishers—A suggestion of Valhalla—Station of Kangamiut—South Ström fjord—Wild mountain scenery—A grave—The landscape changes its aspect—Shoals in the fjord—We wander inland for three days and reach the inland ice—Mads—The reindeer hunting grounds—Strange appearance of the soil near the ice—Signs of prevailing south-east winds—Jensen goes to a *nunatak*—Whortleberries—We return to our tent—Other parts to the north of the fjord are explored—A native clergyman—The coming winter casts a shadow before it—A magnesia lake—Farewell to South Störm fjord.

WE left Holstenborg on the 15th July, and, going south, we were stopped, two days after, on one of the outer islands by snow and rain. It was the only really dark weather and heavy sky that we had experienced; but there was no occasion for feeling dull, as our somewhat isolated island afforded much of interest. The ruin of an Eskimo house was found on the very highest ground, which was remarkable, for, as a rule, habitations are situated as near the

Digitized by Google

water as possible. Swarms of razor-billed auks afforded good sport, and an occasional burgomaster was brought down. It was not difficult to imagine one's self on one of the islands of Scandinavia, until the clouds, at intervals, spread and showed us a distant mainland with snow-covered mountains of five to six thousand feet high. The panorama then was grander than anything to be seen in Norway. Most mountains had glaciers. One resembled a pyramid, one a dome, and another, which was among the highest, had the form of three gigantic obelisks leaning against each other. Our island had deep clefts, during the season inhabited by black guillemot, and the ruins of eider-ducks' nests were found at each step; but the place had already been plundered this year, and it was scarcely probable that any ducks had been left to hatch their young ones. Under the grey sky, the colour of the rocks glittered purple from the numerous garnets. On other parts the granite was black as coal, with white quartz veins and grey or yellow layers. The saying that, in Greenland, storm, rain, and fog sets in when the barometer marks "very dry" proved correct on this occasion, and not till it sank did the weather clear up and we proceed.

We came south among innumerable islands and low reefs, where the water was so shallow that many square miles ran dry at low tide, only intersected by narrow channels. A certain Andreas Olsen here immortalized himself, in the beginning of this century, by surveying these banks and erecting landmarks to warn navigators off them. We

Digitized by Google

AMONG THE OUTER ISLANDS.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

visited one of his two large cairns, showing the north border of the shoal.

The coast was low, gradually rising until some two miles inland, where hills with rounded peaks arose. Rivers cut the land, and on the banks of one we found the landscape enlivened by tents, and people busy salmon-fishing. They belonged to Kangamiut, in the district of Sukkertoppen. A well-dressed, robust woman, with a green top-knot, came and presented her son, a boy six years of age, who seemed to be a spirited lad, full of the ambition of becoming a good marksman. He was constantly practising with stones and miniature harpoons, aud afforded us much pleasure by his boldness. His mother seemed very proud of him and of the fact that his father was a Danish sailor.

The 23rd, at noon, we rested on an island in the entrance to a fjord, and the same evening we camped at its farther end. Though the whole length of the fjord was only some twenty-two miles, it surpassed anything that we had yet seen in bold mountain scenery.

It was not unlike the mouth of an immense carnivorous animal, whose teeth were mountains some four to five thousand feet high. As the boat proceeded the scene changed, and the eye was attracted from one picture to another seeming to surpass it; but it was after having landed on the farthermost shore that the landscape became altogether imposing. The air was transparent and calm. In the west the waters merged into the sky, both resembling an endless space wherein hills, trees, or islands were reflected

Digitized by Google

as distinctly, both in outline and colour, as the objects they were a natural picture of, forming floating masses whose distance from the eye it was impossible to define, looking near and at the same time very far.

A green birch forest was in the shadow on the plain where our tent was erected, and beyond that mountains of five thousand feet rose abruptly. Their summits, golden with the rays of the low sun, contrasted strongly with the deep-blue sky, and, as though to remind us of the northern latitude of the spot, the ice in their clefts glittered with a force that emphasized the depth of colour. A mysterious sound floated in the air. It came from some waterfalls, with clouds of spray flying over the vigorous greensward at their feet. Never have I beheld a place coming nearer to the idea which I imagine that our forefathers entertained of Valhalla. Here was the very eternal day of Valhalla, being unlike the fleeting one of earth in that the subdued light of midnight heightened the mysteriousness of the place. I was almost surprised at not meeting the old heroes in person. It would have seemed nothing less than natural on my wanderings that night, and more than once did it occur that I suddenly fancied I heard the clash and clang of swords; but it was only the music of the cascades, and I had to console myself with the persuasion that the doings of spirits were invisible and inaudible to my profane senses. Our men brought us two blue fox cubs that hereafter came to follow us, and soon felt at home in their wooden box.

Digitized by Google

A SUGGESTION OF VALHALLA.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Not till Friday, the 25th, did we leave this suggestion of Valhalla and once more enter the prosaic world among the islands, where for two days we were detained by rain and fog.

Our next trip was to the outpost station Kangamiut, the former site of the colony Sukkertoppen. At a distance the town looked quite gay with its few but well-built houses. The number of people at home was but small, and those were of the poorest class, as the able and industrious ones had gone salmon and halibut fishing or reindeer hunting. The outposter was a Dane, as was also a carpenter who had been in Greenland since 1836 and now enjoyed his pension from the trade. Both had married natives and given their offspring a thoroughly Eskimo education. The outposter's wife had taught herself the Danish language and had read an astonishing number of books, thus gaining both knowledge and refinement without losing any of her good Eskimo qualities.

We were told that last winter had been very trying from want of provisions, and even kamiks (native boots made of raw hides) and the skins of kayaks had been boiled and eaten. There were fourteen widows with children, most of the deceased husbands having been able hunters who had been drowned in kayaks, a sad proof of how dangerous this sort of boat is. After having provided stores and procured a pilot for South Ström fjord, with which our crew were unacquainted, we reached, on the 1st of August, a part of the coast bordered by mountains concealing their peaks in the clouds and

Digitized by Google

with occasional glaciers in their crevices, and we camped in the evening on a moraine, on gravel and loose stones. The next day the clouds disappeared and showed us a row of mountains not unlike the houses in a Dutch town with ornamented gable ends. The shore being steep and the current strong, we found very few fit landing-places, and had to run into a deep bay, but were fully compensated for the loss of time thus caused by the many beautiful spots which we passed. Though none of the hills were of any considerable height—the highest scarcely exceeding two thousand feet—they were so extraordinarily grouped that they often surprised us by the boldness of their outlines and the immensity of the rocks, lying spread about or tumbled into the water, as well as by the vivid colour of the vegetation between the red, yellow, or grey rocks.

We pitched our tent in a snug corner on soft moss between heather and brushwood, near a small murmuring stream falling into the innermost part of the bay. Some mosquitoes came to greet us, and an indignant fox protested against trespassing on its rightful dominion, expressing its contempt for us in general by keeping up a constant howling, which the echo repeated many times. It may have been the very fox whose young ones we had previously captured, for the distance from here to the Valhalla fjord was not so very great overland. Next forenoon we were stopped at the entrance of this little bay by the strong current and a contrary wind. We found, on landing, a grave, which, contrary to custom, was situated but a few feet above high-water

Digitized by Google

mark. It consisted of large stones piled on top of the body against a rock. Opening it, we found the bones, white, hard, and of an unusual size even for a European. Some of them, as one upper arm, were broken, and the skull was wanting. None of our people could give any information as to whose they were. One of them remembered to have heard about a man who had been killed somewhere hereabouts, his head being cut off and thrown into the sea.

In the afternoon the wind and current changed, and we made rapid headway through the curved run of the fjord. Two lofty promontories concealed the inner waters from our view, and having passed the last one, we beheld a landscape of a totally different character to that which we had just left. "*Pinne suzia!*" (how beautiful!) exclaimed the women in chorus. The fjord widened into a lake; the surrounding land was low, hilly, and free from snow. It made me think of the Limfjord and some other Danish waters, where hills covered by heather and grass rise gently from the water's edge. These were at least four times as large, but the impression still maintained of the mountains just passed seemed to reduce the hills of fifteen hundred feet to the dimensions of hillocks. At the place where we camped stood a considerable forest, with trees some eight or ten feet high. The flowers were endless among the soft grass, and we saw many small birds, ptarmigans, and hares. Rowing and sailing all the next day, we reached the end of the fjord, passing on our way some bays surrounded by plains. The water was quite fresh, and so shallow that we finally found a

Digitized by Google

difficulty in landing, as the bottom was of very soft clay. Before us and on both sides was a plain, with a broad and shallow river in the middle, impossible to cross on account of the soft clay. On the beach of the fjord were hundreds of petrifactions, mostly of angmasets. The plain was surrounded by low hills of yellowish, dry appearance, and, except at the muddy river and the fjord, there was no water to be found anywhere.

On the morning of the 6th, after having secured our boat and tents, and left two men and a woman to guard them, we started, nine in all, on foot for the interior, carrying everything necessary for a week's excursion. We followed a path trod by occasional hunters who visit these parts for reindeer. It is remarkable to observe the length of time such a path will last in these latitudes without being overgrown. As Greenlanders have a way of walking similar to that of the Indians, the path was very narrow. It was frequently crossed by fox runs, which were narrower but equally hard, and straight as a line. The foxes seemed to be numerous and the real masters of these lands. For a long way the ground was level, but at length we began to descend and climb up again where the water had cut ravines in the soft clay, and at one place we had to climb over a rocky hill extending far into the moraine.

The banks of the river were steep and some hundred and fifty feet high, being mostly clay, but in places there were also sandhills thinly covered by coarse grass. At seven o'clock in the evening we reached a lake, where we found a tent inhabited

Digitized by Google

by two hunters with their families. They had been there a month, and had only shot nineteen deer. "Last year we had sixty," the owner of the tent remarked, with a sigh.

We camped in the neighbourhood, and the next day we witnessed the bustle of the Greenlanders on leaving camp. Hides and dried flesh were packed, the tents taken down, and their skins rolled up. The children, who had made small tents for themselves, strove to imitate the grown-up people in seriousness and activity, and only the youngest, not yet being able to walk, sat quietly in the grass, dressing a dead young hare like a doll, while a gosling walked carelessly about from group to group. One of the hunters, Mads, was persuaded to guide us for a day into the country, as the man from Kangamiut, who had undertaken to do so, acknowledged that he knew nothing of the neighbourhood. A lake which we passed had no apparent outlet, yet was full of salmon, according to the statement of Mads, who told us that no man had ever seen it frozen. When he occasionally came here, early in the month of June, all the lakes were frozen except this one. From one of the highest mountains, where the barometer marked two thousand feet above the sea, we had a fair view over the surrounding country. It rose and fell like the ocean waves, and contained many lakes. To the north it was open as far as the eye could reach; to the east it was bounded by the wall of the inland ice, not looking to be more than half a day's journey from us; and to the south the view was closed by hills. Broad

Digitized by Google

rivers coming from the ice cut the land in various places, branching off and meeting again.

The country we saw before us was the chief reindeer-hunting ground of Greenland, and the rendezvous for hunters from south and north. Everywhere are evidences of the existence formerly of large numbers of those animals; since the introduction of rifles they have been greatly thinned by reckless hunting, and will probably continue to diminish, until they have become so scarce that it will not pay the hunter to exert himself for them. The number of deer annually killed for several years previous to 1850 has been rated at twenty-five thousand, but after that time the chase rapidly declined, until the annual export of skins dwindled down to nothing, and the total number of animals slain now is estimated at one thousand per annum. For many years the antlers were an article of trade, fetching about one penny a pound, and the quantity of them dispersed over the country proved to be so great that at one station more than one hundred thousand pounds were brought for sale within a short period. It is supposed that during the briskest period of the chase, one-half of the flesh was abandoned on the rocks, while a great many deer were killed only for the sake of their hide and tongues.

We had hoped to reach the inland ice that evening, but its whiteness proved to be deceptive, and when we camped late at night we did not seem to have made much progress. Mads returned to his family, while we in the early morning proceeded

Digitized by Google

over hill and dale and by lakes, and finally succeeded that evening in pitching our tent under the inland ice. During our journey we were surprised to see the soil cut up and grooved on the south-east side of the hills, where the scanty vegetation was bent towards north-west as though it had been burnt up by strong south-easterly winds, while vegetation grew luxuriantly on the opposite side. The grooves were parallel, and looked as if they had been cut by immense cannon-balls. As we neared the ice, they increased both in number and size until they resembled the holes made by the wind in sand-dunes, or else the soil was altogether blown away.

We had seen a lake which appeared to be some two hours' walk distant, and was filled with bits of ice. We were a whole day in reaching it, and found it a mile long, and what we had taken to be bits of ice were bergs upwards of twenty feet out of water. To the east the lake met the inland ice, standing like a wall of white colour, intermixed with blue, violet, and green colours. Where the ice met the shore, this was in places thrown up in large trenches as by an immense plough, and the rocks had been ground to gravel under its pressure. In some places the ice was clean, but in others it was covered by a thick layer of earth with big stones. Where the nearest hills facing the ice were barren, the stone was not even spotted by black lichens, as is generally the case throughout Greenland. There was a stretch where the ice evidently had drawn back, and we could see not long since there

Digitized by Google

had existed a lake whose waters had been pressed up very high, and which had afterwards run dry altogether. Several hills had last year been clothed with a rich vegetation, which some occurrence had smothered, even the high moss having been killed, while another spot, not far off, and apparently enjoying the same local circumstances, had been left untouched.

SURFACE OF THE INLAND ICE, WITH A RIVULET.

The wind was fresh, south-east, almost stiff, and blew from the large ice desert, but it was mild, almost warm, and we had 8° of Reaumur (= 50° Fahrenheit) during the night at our tent. Jensen wandered the next day, accompanied by two men, to a nunatak, whence he returned the same evening, bringing home a pair of antlers and worn-out kamiks. My own excursion on the ice did not last

Digitized by Google

many hours. I succeeded in seeing the very blue lakes, the enormous cracks, and the streams of water, but when, turning my back on these, I saw nothing but the white hills, the aspect struck me as being the most savage and hopeless in existence, one compared to which the desert of Sahara seems hospitable. Where the ice meets the water there the sight is the prettiest, owing to the many tender tints of colour. Still the ice, under all circumstances, is for ever a new wonder, and never fails to fill the mind with awe.

In the morning of the 10th of August, we started to go back. A different route to that by which we came was chosen. We found neither ice nor snow anywhere, but an incomprehensibly rich vegetation in places sheltered from the south-east wind and on the north side of the hills. We passed numerous lakes with geese, northern divers, and so forth upon them. It was in my endeavours to get a shot at some that I strayed away from the rest of the party, and did not meet it again till I reached the fjord, thirty-two miles distant. A flock of geese had attracted my attention, and, knowing how shy those birds are, I crept for a long distance along the border of a lake. The geese had been on the look-out and flew away, but some ducks settled in a lake farther on. Before giving chase, I looked round for my companions, of whom I had been in advance, and saw them trudging along in file at a distance. I went after my ducks, but had no better luck than with the geese, when my attention was attracted by divers somewhere else. All in vain, however. After

Digitized by Google

a while the thing became monotonous, and I began to look for my companions. I mounted the highest hills, shouted, and fired my gun; but they were neither to be seen nor heard, and I gave up looking for them, contenting myself with the reflection that the country was not a difficult one to find one's way in. As they carried the provisions, I had to provide for myself the best way I could, and made a very good meal off small birds, together with whortleberries and water from the nearest lake. I found fresh footprints of reindeer, and also remains of former camps, where antlers had been gathered in large quantities and piled up in pyramids as high as the hunters had been able to throw them. Antlers were literally scattered over the entire country.

As the land here appeared to rise and fall without many steep hills, to be well watered with lakes, and to be cut by rivers from the ice, it looked in this season as though every part might be put under the plough. Birch and willow trees were frequent, and whortleberries, in such large numbers that some spots were blue with them, delayed my walk considerably, looking so pretty between the yellowish leaves. It was harvest time in this country. The grasses were ripe, and the wild flowers had run to seed. The feeling of being all alone in this vast region made it seem doubly strange to me that all this land, where formerly were flocks of deer, should be desolate, and only occupied by birds and foxes. I met the expedition a short way from camp, which we reached after midnight, dusty and tired, and we were all soon sound asleep.

Digitized by Google

THE INLAND ICE, WITH A NUNATAK

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

A fresh breeze sprang up during the night, whirling the clay and dust in the air, and almost stifling us. We took to the boat, but were soon compelled by the wind to land on the opposite shore, where we again fell in with Mads and his family, they having erected their tent there, in order to seek for reindeer towards the south. We bought a gosling from him, which with the foxes completed our menagerie, and soon became so tame that it followed us everywhere. Mads told us of a salt-water lake on the north side of the fjord, giving us all particulars concerning it, and we went in search of it the next day. We camped as usual, and when morning came packed our lighter tent and what else was necessary for an inland excursion, and proceeded to survey a country that had been described as being dry and waterless. After having climbed the nearest mountains, ascending some thousand feet, a surprising landscape presented itself and indelibly impressed the memory. It was of the kind that probably charms more than many others, although it only contained heather and lakes.

We wandered the whole day over hills and by lakes of different sizes, from the very smallest to some upwards of two miles in length. We saw two reindeer, but one of our men firing at too great a distance, both made their escape. As to the flocks of geese and ducks, they were all too watchful for us.

Shower after shower passed over the country, producing a variety of effects refreshing and charming to behold. We met but a few signs of there having been any hunters about, while most of the

Digitized by Google

antlers found—and they were plentiful—had been shed by the animals themselves. Footprints were frequent, and on the clay borders of a lake they were so numerous as to present the appearance of a flock of oxen having been driven by. This was evidently a district where the animals were not chased to such an extent as in the country to the east. We camped in the evening, and next morning found the lakes frozen and most of the hills covered by snow.

The salt-water lake was not to be found, so, returning to the boat, we entered another branch of the fjord, going as far as the clay shoals would permit. We were here visited by two hunters in a kayak, coming from the opposite side. They had crossed a branch of the inland ice to a nunatak for reindeer, and the eyes of one had been attacked by snow-blindness. The lids were swollen, almost closing the eyes, and he was hardly able to see. They had killed eighteen deer, and complained of bad hunting this year. They had never heard of any extraordinary salt-water lake, but believed that all the lakes in this district were more or less salt.

Also here, we were in the height of the whortleberry season, and the surrounding rocks and our own tent bore witness to the fact that foxes, ravens, and gulls lived on them. As a proof of how far Greenlanders are from having a prejudice against food despised by us, I can state that I saw them boil and eat a young fox, a performance to which they also were addicted whenever a raven had been too impudent and fallen to the gun.

Digitized by Google

A LAKE IN THE SNOW-FREE, INLAND.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The surrounding coast was covered by willow and birch, leaning in a north-westerly direction. The fall of the year had already marked their leaves with a brighter colour, and the birch especially displayed tones from light green to yellow and red.

On Saturday morning the entire land was white from a snowfall during the night, and the showers alternating with bright sunshine made the day very interesting, by showing us what looked like a new country, and bringing forth the vivid lights and purple shadows in strange contrast to the heavy clouds.

The tides caused us considerable delays, the shoals becoming dry at the ebb, and we were unable to leave till the afternoon, when we started to return. We did not go much farther that day, and ran at night into a little bay with a river, where we again met people in a tent. It was a catechist with his family, salmon-fishing, together with an elderly man. One more family, at present out hunting, was the entire population of the little place near Kangamiut of which he was the clergyman, and the flock being small, the shepherd's pay was in proportion; he enjoyed a salary of one pound a year.

The congregation, except his wife, children, and brother-in-law, being away, and it being Sunday, he seized the opportunity of delivering a sermon to our crew, who had not attended service since they left Holstenborg. All except a crippled boy congregated in our crew's tent, where their clear voices, when singing some hymns, sounded well. There

Digitized by Google

was both candour and vigour in the catechist's sermon, and he was apparently in possession of an uncommon eloquence, which seemed to be appreciated.

We were again informed of the salt-water lake. It was situated, we were told, close to the place where we had ascended the hill, and the elderly man agreed to act as our guide. We consequently returned and landed once more at the place where we had landed before, but snow and rain prevented us for a few days from making any excursions of discovery. On Wednesday morning the ground was again covered by snow, which, however, in the course of the forenoon disappeared as far as about three hundred feet above the sea.

The lake was at last found, close to the path we had followed previously, and the bottle of water that was brought to Copenhagen proved afterwards to contain a large quantity of magnesia. There was no vegetation of any kind on its shores, and the surrounding stones and pebbles were covered with a white crust.

W again went on board; and when we bade farewell to the hills, they were all dressed in white, so different to their aspect when we first saw them. We had found the length of the South Ström fjord to be one hundred miles, and, together with thirty-two miles overland to the inland ice, the land had here proved to be broader than in any other part of Greenland. In rowing out, the sky remained heavy, with occasional snow showers, and the temperature was half a degree above freezing point.

Digitized by Google

THE CLERGYMAN'S TENT

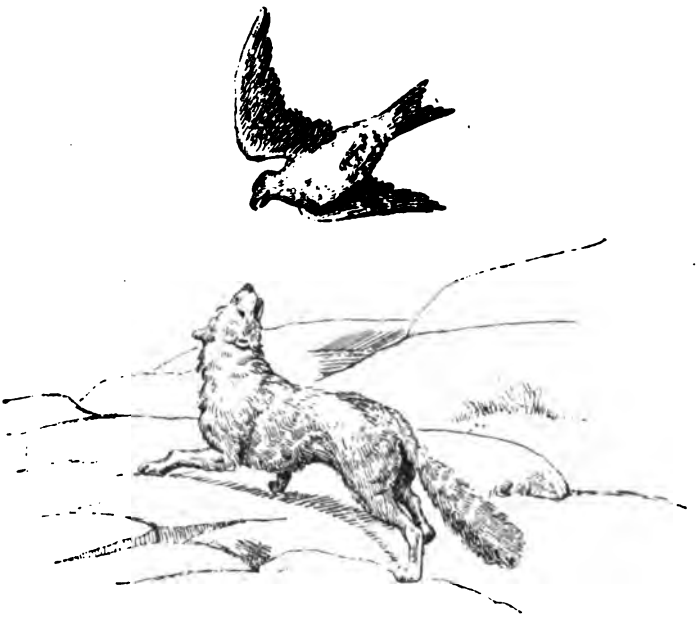
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Not till Saturday did the weather clear. On a low point, with pebbles filling up the spaces between loose blocks of granite, not a foot over high-water mark, we camped one evening, it being the only place with sufficient space for the tents in the neighbourhood. On the 24th we reached the open sea, three weeks after entering the Ström fjord.

TWO REINDEER.

Digitized by Google



FOX AND FALCON.

CHAPTER V.

On the coast—A fight between a fox and a falcon—We return to Kangamiut—Tales of winter life—Our crew gives a ball and prepares to go home—A boat is hired to take us to Sukkertoppen, where a fresh crew is engaged—Great catch of salmon—We enter Eternity fjord—Grand surroundings—Kayakers are sent to tell us to return—All hands "splice the main brace"—The Venice of Greenland—Mary Magdalena and Habakkuk—The reason why Claus Skifte left his native isle—Eskimo superstitions—The fox and the goose embark with us—We reach Copenhagen safely.

It was quite a novelty to return to the ocean and islands, with their swarms of gulls and other birds, and we were struck at seeing how far the vegetation was behind that in the interior. Many berries

Digitized by Google

were still green, and numerous flowers had only just bloomed. Large fields of ice still filled the cracks, and not a few bays were yet fringed with ice. We witnessed an amusing fight between a fox and a falcon. The fox was attacked, and tried hard to defend itself against the bold bird, which constantly struck at the fox's eyes. How the battle would have ended it is difficult to guess; for the falcon was put to flight by our arrival, and his enemy made haste to escape among the hills.

The salmon season was drawing near its end. At least, we met several boats, both wooden and skin, on their return to Kangamiut. On an island where we stayed overnight, another crew landed and unloaded their cargo. The owner of the boat had filled thirty barrels with fish during the summer. Another day we made a stay at a little place of only two houses. It was the home of our friend the catechist, whom we had met at the salmon river; but the houses were empty, as none of the families had yet returned. A number of large ruined houses, surrounded by immense heaps of seal-bones, and the luxuriant tall grass which is never wanting in Greenland on spots where people have lived and manured the ground with their offal, proved that the place had been inhabited for centuries. On Wednesday, the 27th, we landed at Kangamiut. The appearance of the town was widely different from that which it had presented when we were there last, crowds of people being assembled, as all the fishermen had returned, while the reindeer hunters were still away. It was a gay and variegated

Digitized by Google

scene, exhibiting all imaginable *nuances* of hair colour, from raven black to the very fairest. Some women had features of the most regular Caucasian type, and would probably, under other circumstances, have been set down as English or American beauties, while others looked repulsively coarse. They were as different in features as they were in attire. Some were well, even richly dressed; others were wrapped in black skin rags, which but imperfectly covered the body, and could hardly be termed clothes at all.

One hears the mission talk of "our Greenlanders." The officials of trade also speak of them as "ours," down to the very outposter, who says "mine" of the inhabitants of his place. The one here was no exception to this rule. He was especially proud of his Greenlanders, vowing that they were among the most able on the whole coast, and I was not far from sharing his opinion. "But we have not made the acquaintance of the American fishermen either," he observed. The walrus is frequently met with in the neighbourhood, and many were the tales of hardships and dangers encountered by those who had come in contact with these ferocious animals. I was shown one man who had been wounded in the face by a tusk, and another who had been struck in the left side of the abdomen, the tusk piercing the body, and yet he had recovered.

I called on the old carpenter formerly mentioned, who was very ready, for a glass of grog, to tell tales of his youth; but, strangely enough, all that had happened to him before his arrival in "the land," as Greenland is generally termed by the sailors and

Digitized by Google

A NATIVE GREENLANDER

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

mechanics, seemed to have vanished entirely from his recollection. "Oh yes; I remember Copenhagen quite well," he said; "there was a place called Brocken's booth, where they sold drinks," but what the place had been like he did not know. "The land" was healthy and fine. In his young days he had spent much time in pleasant rambles with the Greenlanders. As for the climate, it could not be better anywhere. Perhaps the winter came somewhat earlier here, and lasted a little longer than at home, but then they also had cold spells there. Now, since the rheumatism had been so bad in his hands that he could not work, he could not handle a gun, and had to stay at home when others went abroad. The catechist also spoke tolerably good Danish, and was well posted in the various political questions of Europe. Like the other Greenlanders who spoke Danish, he always in that language called Denmark "home," although he had not even seen it. The winter ice was never of any consequence here; sledges were not used, and dogs were merely kept for the sake of their fur. If it was ever so cold open water was generally seen, and the autumn and winter months were especially favourable for walrus-hunting. When severe frost set in the surface of the sea would be covered by a heavy white fog, and the hunters had in such cases to be very watchful of the wind, as sudden storms, with heavy fine snow, would oftentimes set in. No one of the present generation had ever seen a bear, although tradition told of bears having formerly been found here.

Digitized by Google

To judge by experiences of previous expeditions in Greenland, our crew had shown extraordinary endurance in continuing so long under a discipline which, however mild, was stricter than that to which they were accustomed. The advanced season had now made them anxious to return home, and they consequently all came and demanded to be discharged. A child-like side of their character came forth here. It happened to them as sometimes to sailors returning from a long voyage and suddenly finding themselves in possession of a quantity of money—they acted as if their wealth was too great ever to come to an end. They crowded the shop half the day, and, in spite of the fact that most of them had joined us with a view of raising sufficient money to enable them to get married, it appeared as though they were determined to part with their few coins as rapidly as possible. Our servant alone sat bewildered, asking herself aloud, "What shall I do with my money this time? When I came back from the excursion with Jensen last time I bought boards for a roof."

It may be remarked that this woman, besides being an excellent cook, had displayed considerable commercial talent. The empty tins were her perquisites, an article much valued by the Greenlanders, especially by those from remote places. On meeting strangers her first care had always been to swap tins, some filled with used-up coffee, for flesh or skins, and as the tins on an average amounted to three a day, she did quite a large trade. Two evenings our crew spent in dancing,

Digitized by Google

and when we started in a wooden boat, and with a fresh crew, they had not yet set off for their homes.

A quantity of very blue ice floated about among the islands. It was said to originate in the Evigheds (Eternity) fjord, which I was told was very dangerous to navigate on account of steep cliffs, with frequent rock slips and falling glaciers. The description raised my curiosity, perhaps partly because of the name of the fjord, and it was with a mixture of hopeful and troubled expectations that I neared the colony Sukkertoppen; for it was not unlikely that the barque *Thorwaldsen* might have arrived to fetch us, and in such a case our Greenland roamings would have been at an end without my having had an opportunity of seeing calving iceblink. If she had not arrived I felt sure that Jensen would make a final excursion, and great was my glee when we entered the harbour and did not find the dreaded *Thorwaldsen* there.

Next day we hired a "woman's boat" and engaged a fresh crew, and once more we left for the inner fjords, going east into the strait separating Hamburgerland from the continent. We first entered a small fjord called Kangerluarsuk, which simply means "fjord," and which name it has in common with two neighbouring fjords. At its termination, some hundred yards from where we camped, was a rivulet flowing from a lake a little way distant. Three of our men went to the rivulet, one with a line, and the others without other tools than their naked hands, and in an hour's time they returned with upwards of eighty salmon trout.

Digitized by Google

Our present crew were more active, and kept themselves cleaner than the former one from Holstenborg, and when we heard anybody remark that people from Sukkertoppen and Kangamiut were superior to the general run of Holstenborgers, the fact was generally ascribed to the demoralizing influence of the foreign fishermen.

We had a fine day's ptarmigan-shooting, about one thousand feet up one of the mountains. These birds had now returned from their breeding-places inland to the shore, where they remain during most part of the winter, sometimes, even when everything is covered by deep snow, coming to the very houses. It was difficult to find a pilot for "Eternity," as most people had a certain dread of it. A man who used to go white-whale hunting there in early spring was finally procured, and on the 2nd of September we entered it, and found ourselves nearly surrounded by blue icebergs. The day was calm, with long fog clouds meandering between the hills, showing here a summit and there the outlines of an island or dark masses of rock, while the sunbeams broke now and again in yellow or red rays through the grey fog. Yet overhead was the clear blue sky, with but a single white cloud. Coming farther in the weather cleared, and we camped in the evening on a promontory, where stood two houses, inhabited during the months of April and May by white whalers. There was more snow, and the rocks had a more rugged aspect than on the coast.

Next forenoon we were detained by the wind,

Digitized by Google

ROWING WOMEN

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

but in the afternoon we proceeded towards the interior fjord, whence a sound like thunder had been heard the whole night. Places suitable for tents were few and far between, but we managed that evening to find a comfortable spot which in grandeur surpassed all that I had ever before seen. It was impossible not to feel elevated by the scenes surrounding us. Steep pinnacles rose in the air, with glaciers between them. Over the mountain ridge and far down into the water stretched the white ice, with blue and green colours in its clefts, standing erect and fantastically shaped at the edges.

Icebergs floated about in all directions, surrounded or covered by flocks of birds, while seals thrust their heads out of water, looking around with an air of being the rightful masters of the place. Rivers foamed on all sides of us, and a sound like that of constant thunder was heard far and wide.

The full moon rose and completed with its magic rays a picture which one could hardly believe belonged to reality, the combination of light and darkness, colour and form, being so undefinable that imagination, strained beyond its powers, gradually drifted into a state of dreamlike, passive admiration. All next day we rowed on, occasionally turning sharp corners. We passed several bird rocks, had to steer cautiously between masses of ice, and at noon found a prominent point, with sufficient room to sit down and take our lunch upon. Again we passed steep cliffs, and in one place we saw ice,

Digitized by Google

ground into little bits, fall down some four thousand feet, roaring terribly. It flowed like a waterfall, and had filled the fjord for miles with the minute fragments.

Constantly we had to beware of coming too near the shore, as rocks would now and again break loose, hurling themselves into the water; and our pilot could tell of cases where men and boats had been struck by such. He had himself last year been on the verge of being crushed in this way. There was another promontory, with room for a tent, near the place where the fjord was met by the inland ice, and there we landed that evening. We had to use the greatest speed possible in unloading the boat of the few goods we carried—our large tent, with all unnecessary goods, had been left at the entrance of the fjord—for, in spite of its being calm, large breakers, started by the falling of masses of ice from the various glaciers, would occasionally raise a heavy surf against the rocks.

I never beheld greater richness of colour, nor a more beautiful scene than that before us. The brilliant snow on the mountains; the large spots on the lower parts where the scanty vegetation had turned purple; the ice and its eternal thunder; sea-gulls, guillemots, cormorants, and kittiwakes; the refreshing weather, and the sun shining over all through a golden haze—everything contributed to create a collection of pictures, impressing themselves on the memory in an ineffaceable manner.

On Friday, the 5th, we rowed back under continued salutes. The fjord was covered by newly

Digitized by Google

frozen ice, through which we had to force our way, and the temperature remained, in spite of the beautiful weather, below freezing point. At noon we were met by two kayaks, sent in search of us to announce the arrival of the *Thorwaldsen*, and in their company we made for the colony with the greatest speed possible. We reached our camping-place of the previous Wednesday that evening, but the following night found us on an island outside of the fjord, camping for the fifty-fourth and last time on this journey.

In celebration of our approaching departure, punch for all hands was brewed. Seated round the bowl, song followed song. Toasts were drunk, and if the speeches were, perhaps, shorter than those we had been accustomed to, and their words not always so carefully picked, their meaning was as good. One man rose and said in a loud voice, "To-morrow Captain-Lieutenant Jensen and other Danish man them travel — hurrah!" and nine vigorous cheers followed.

On the Monday we reached Sukkertoppen, where the *Thorwaldsen* lay ready waiting for us, and a favourable wind sprang up a few days later. I felt as if I had been on a picnic—rather a long one, it is true, and commencing in proportionately tame localities, but ending in nothing less than "Eternity."

Sukkertoppen is situated on a tolerably large island, where it occupies a small peninsula which forms the harbour at high water, divided into three parts, where intercourse sometimes only can be maintained by boats. From this reason it has been

Digitized by Google

called the Venice of Greenland. It is the most populous place in that country, and has a fine stone church. The surrounding coast is bold, lofty, and a few miles distant is the conical, sharp-pointed island "Kin of Sal," a well-known landmark.

One of the few instances of natives attempting to emanicipate themselves from foreign rule by forming an independent Christian community, occurred here about a hundred years ago. It is related by H. Rink that a woman named Maria Magdalena pretended to have had certain visions and revelations, and claimed to be a prophetess. Her husband's name was Habakkuk; him she called Jesus, and he became the real head of a sect which formed a settlement at the Evigheds fjord, separated completely from the mission, and committed excesses which alarmed the Europeans in the country. According to native tradition, Habakkuk had been reindeer-hunting, taking another woman along with him and leaving his wife at home, who was very sad from having just lost her two children. While staying alone, Maria Magdalena had a dream, in which was shown her what the reindeer-hunters were about. When they returned, she told them her dream, and they were astonished to hear how exactly she described their doings. When Habakkuk told her of his second spouse, she became very jealous and said, "I shall take a European for my second husband when we remove." Whereupon she went outdoors and met two spirits, who rebuked her for her rash words, and she returned to the house. One evening, when two men, who had been

Digitized by Google

dancing and telling tales, came out of doors, they saw two clouds of smoke—one dark, another bright —and they heard psalm-singing. Those indoors also heard the singing, and presently Maria arose, grinding her teeth and trembling all over. From this time people really began to believe in her, and three places during the first winter accepted Habbakuk for their prophet. After a while, all the Greenlanders repaired to him, and he inspired them with obedience sufficiently implicit to cause any person whom he or his wife might choose to point out to be put to death. They said that none were allowed to be witches, and all those whom they considered such they punished. A poor wretch was seized and her hands pelted with stones. Then when they came to throw her into the sea, she showed no fear of her murderers, but gazing calmly at the sky, took her snuff-box from her hood, and returned it again after having taken a pinch. She was just being seized by the throat, and on the point of being thrown into the sea, when a message came from Habakkuk to the effect that, when casting her into the sea, her executioners were to say nothing but—" Thou prayest for our sins."

This injunction was obeyed, the surrounding crowd repeating the words at the top of their voices. When the body drifted on shore, two kayakers, who happened to pass, crushed the hands of the dead with stones in order to have their share in her chastisement. Habakkuk's second wife was with child, and it was decided that, if it proved to be a boy, he should be called Christ; but she bore a

Digitized by Google

daughter, much to the disappointment of the congregation; and when, in the following spring, the missionary arrived, attended by the native teacher, the whole movement was speedily brought to a close.

When the missionary and his attendants arrived, Habakkuk would not go outside to receive them, so they entered his tent. Before they had said anything, Habakkuk brusquely broke out with, "The chief persons in heaven wish that men should love one another." The native teacher replied, "Certainly the chief persons in heaven have commanded men to love each other, but why hast thou broken the seventh commandment? Why hast thou not followed it?" to which Habakkuk gave no answer. And from that time his sway was at an end.

The excesses of this sect are still remembered by the population; and of the respect once paid to Habakkuk, a slight portion is said to be still paid to his descendants.

Claus Skifle was a man who had been living in Sukkertoppen for half a century. He was a native of the island of Læso in the Kattegat, where the custom of the men is to work on their farms in the winter and go "milking the blue cow," during the summer months, especially making voyages to Greenland and Iceland. He had come out as a young sailor and engaged himself to the trade, married a native girl, and lived now as an old man surrounded by a very large family of both grand, and great-grand-children. "When I was young," he told me, "I used to go sailing, like all other young

Digitized by Google

lads, in the summer months, leaving the field work to be done by labourers from the continent; but, coming home one autumn, I found that all the pretty girls had become engaged to clodhoppers, and although I loved my native land as well as any one, I made up my mind to leave and never return."

I was told many curious tales of ancient superstitious beliefs still existing among the Greenlanders—of lonely hunters having met beings twice the size of an ordinary man, or dwarfs roaming about among the hills; of kayakers having seen living beings deep in the water under them, or having killed animals bearing evidence of having been wounded by other weapons than those of the hunter himself. None of those tales were stranger than those of the Kevitoks, *i.e.* people who, for some reason or other, such as having been ill-treated or offended, stray into the interior, change into supernatural beings by entering into alliance with Tornansuk, the ancient god, and for ever threaten their enemies. Cases have really been known of people having quitted society from spite and existed for a long time in the interior. Jensen had on one of his former expeditions found a cave; within it was the body of a man who had died among stores of ptarmigan, hares, etc., and still no weapons of any kind wherewith to kill the game were found around him. Stories are told of reindeer having been killed, carrying part of an arrow, a weapon which is never used by Greenlanders. The Kevitok is supposed to be able to remove to wherever he wishes in an instant. When a thing has been stolen, a kayak

Digitized by Google

spoilt, or a fox-trap upset, it is always the Kevitok who has been there. He is the foe of human society in general, and no sooner have evenings begun to lengthen than Kevitoks are seen or heard everywhere.

A GIRL FROM SUKKERTOPPEN.

It was not without regret and with a desire of returning that I left "the land" that year. I had received lasting impressions of a nature that, in point of picturesque scenery, is hardly surpassed by any other in the world; of scenes that, in spite of their wild character, were richer in colour than

Digitized by Google

the sunny south itself, where moss, lichens, and fresh greensward sprinkled with flowers formed the strongest contrast to the marked colours of the rock, and where sky and water displayed the brightest lights. These scenes were enlivened by flocks of birds, and the necessary means of subsistence in most places were near at hand. The pure air and constant motion increased the appetite; but, even under ordinary circumstances, one is not apt to refuse fried ptarmigan, hare, boiled salmon fresh from the river, angmaset which one can go and bale up with the hands, or a meal of reindeer soup, boiled tongue, and roast joint, with boiled quanes.

To the natives, roaming in summer from place to place seems to be the ideal of existence, and in making acquaintance with the country one comes to understand their well-known longing for home when fate has cast them on other shores. Has the winter been severe, and have they been compelled to face hardships in the way of cold and hunger, they no sooner feel the spring air than all is forgotten. *Then* there is plenty of provision for everybody, and they soon put on fat, about the only way in which many of them lay up a supply for coming hard times. They have many good qualities, of which honesty and peaceableness are among the best, but they are careless for the morrow, and consequently rarely attain a great age. Perhaps this carelessness is a natural consequence of a hunter's life, and those people are merely hunters. Though living by the sea coast, their implements for catching fish are very incomplete; and though they love

Digitized by Google

quanes and any other vegetable which the country produces, none of them have ever felt inclined to cultivate such. Like other hunting nations, they are doing their utmost to extirpate game. The eider-duck, for instance, which probably has no better breeding-place in the world than the islands on the coast, and might render a large yearly income, has no rest anywhere, and a Greenlander will wantonly destroy bird, young ones, and half-hatched eggs. All that has been done by the Danes to teach them to be provident has been in vain. Every winter they suffer from starvation, and every spring their hope revives. One may see on a spring day, when the streets are filled with offal mixed with soft snow and water, men and women crowd on top of their houses, to let the sun shine on them, and to breathe the refreshing air, immovable for hours, dreaming and appreciating existence. Courage returns with the beginning of a new life in nature, and whoever is able, prepares to leave town. Then the ceiling is broken down and used for fuel, without giving a thought as to where a new one has to be found in the autumn. The cares of the future find no room in a breast filled with so much happiness.

On the 10th of September, the *Thorwaldsen* got under way. The goose had grown to be a fine animal, considering itself a member of the expedition, and insisting on walking up and down deck between Jensen and myself when we took our daily exercise, and for her safety the remaining fox (one had made its escape) had been shut up in a box. We saw the Aurora Borealis, and sat of an evening

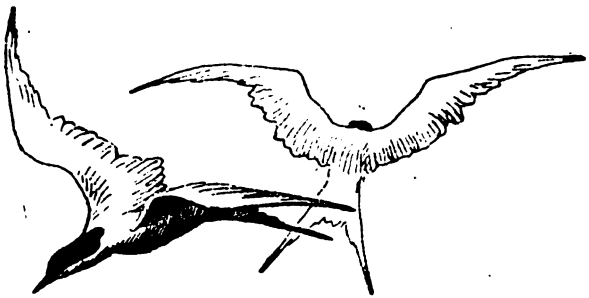
Digitized by Google

listening to yarns about the island of Van Boss, which is to be seen on very old maps, and of which the sailors always make mention. Some suppose it to have existed and sunk. At all events, it has been well buried, since, according to our skipper, soundings of one hundred and twenty fathoms on the place where it is marked have not fetched bottom. The same authority declares that the ocean there is always in a singular motion, and the barometer sometimes, even in fine weather, falls below "Earthquake."

The expedition was not so lively as on the passage out. I believe it felt as we did when, in youth, we rode home of an evening after having been at the fair and enjoyed all its pleasures. Piles of newspapers lay on the table, and my recollection of the great world was recalled when I saw the headings of "Cholera," "Emperors," and "Dynamite." On the 29th of September our anchor dropped off Copenhagen.

KRONBORG CASTLE.

Digitized by Google



TERNS.

CHAPTER VI.

Off to Greenland again—All birds do not travel safely—The *White Bear* is presented at the capital of Greenland—Good seal-catching—Early spring—A Moravian mission—Early Moravians and Dr. H. Rink's remarks on them—The Holstenborgers disturbed in their sleep.

It is a peculiarity of the Arctic regions that they attract more than other parts of the globe. Few people have visited them without being filled with a veneration difficult to be understood by those who never saw their bright day or breathed their pure air. I was no exception to the rule, but felt that I had only seen enough to give me a longing for more, and I had tried my utmost to find an opportunity to renew my impressions and to learn a little more from Mother Nature—the old, the only great and for ever modern master for all who associate with colour-tubes and paint-brushes. Not till 1888 did I succeed, and on the 29th of April I went on board the steam bark *Hvidbjornen* (The White Bear) in Copenhagen.

Digitized by Google

It appears that Denmark is studying Greenland thoroughly. That year a mineralogist, Mr. Stenstrup, a botanist, and an anthropologist were sent out by the Commissioners for the Geographical Investigation of Greenland. Of these, Mr. Stenstrup had on former occasions made himself famous, especially by his surveys and discoveries in the northern regions.

As the ocean throughout its changes for ever resembles itself, most sea journeys are much alike. They remind us of the pause between two acts in a play, when, under the impression of past events, we are wondering what will follow. We look at a drop scene that has relation neither to the past nor future, and at once we feel that some little scenes in the last act were ludicrous, and realize that we now judge differently to what we did as long as we were under illusions.

Our trip had a peculiar interest in the fact that *The Bear*, as the bark was familiarly termed, was a new vessel, and the changing circumstances afforded much opportunity for a display of deep nautical knowledge. In the early season the weather was rough, with snow and hail, while the coming of spring was indicated by birds wandering north. Through a veil of snow we saw Shetland, and came close to leeward of Fair Isle, with its steep sides and green plain. Not far from there an exhausted starling alighted on the deck and was put in a cage with some pigeons to recover, but they soon ended its sufferings by pecking it to death. In a not less brutal way I saw the gulls murder

Digitized by Google

another little land-bird trying to find shelter on board. As if the sea-birds were playing a funny game, they chased the little singer, spearing it with their beaks until it fell dead into the water.

On Thursday, the 7th of May, we passed the longitude of Cape Farewell, and the following day the latitude of the same cape. Very few Danish vessels ever come in sight of the Huk, as sailors call it, and there are not many captains in the service of the royal trade who ever saw it; they generally keep some fifty miles south of it, as it is the worst place for the main ice, the belt of floe ice coming from the Spitzbergen and Siberian seas through the Denmark strait. It had been the intention to touch at Fiskernæs and land the mineralogist and botanist, but fogs prevented the execution of the plan, and the course was kept northward, where we passed many icebergs. I counted more than forty at a time, but we were lucky enough not to see any of the dreaded main ice, and probabilities in that direction grew less the farther north we went. On the 20th of May a fresh breeze got up and cleared the heavy clouds away, enabling us to see the mountains near Godthaab. We were soon among the Kook Islands and nearing the colony. The Danish authorities and the pilot came on board, while curious kayakers followed us. A salute of three guns was fired for the inspector and three for the colony, while the latter replied with nine for the *Hvidbjornen*. After having shown the steamer to the colony of Godthaab, we entered the harbour, situated a considerable way from the town, and in the mild night after an

Digitized by Google

interesting day the anchor dropped in the still waters surrounded by cliffs, the journey having come to an end after a sail of three weeks.

In the ship season Godthaab is famous for festivities. Every evening there were parties given by the Danes, whose children's hands were filled with new toys, and the Greenlanders had balls in the carpenter's shop. There are more Danes here than at any other place in Greenland. The inspector for South Greenland, the physician, the clergyman,

GODTHAAB.

and the agent, with his assistants, live here, and there is a seminary for native catechists, and a printing office. Consequently the place, according to the very humble pretensions of the country, has the status of a capital city, and the streets look quite gay with the church, stores, and houses—the very Greenlanders have sloping roofs—and the indispensable adornment of every colony, the flagstaff with a battery of three small cannons. An illustrated newspaper in the Eskimo language is printed here by a native, who has been taught the art of

Digitized by Google

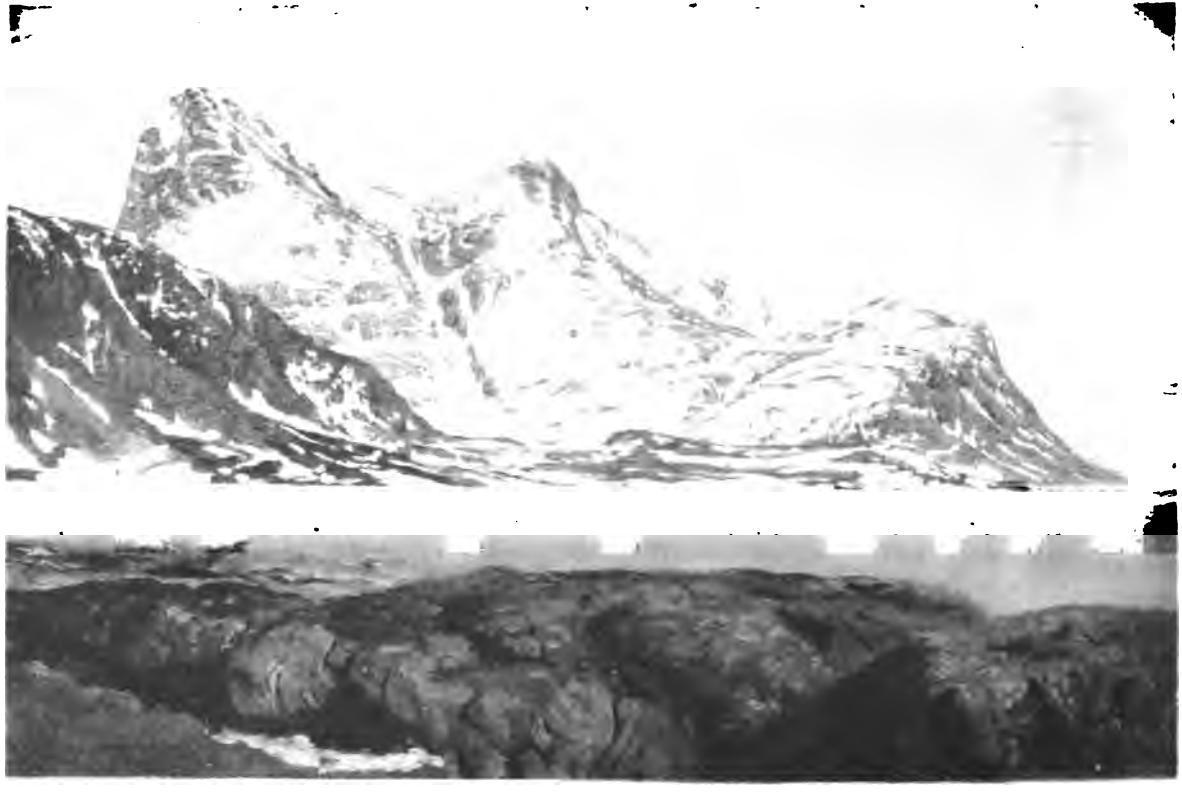
printing and drawing on stone in Denmark, and is distributed throughout all parts of the country.

The winter had been mild here, while it had been severe in Northern Europe. Some people claim that weather in Greenland is always the reverse of what it is with us. Is the summer in Europe a rainy one, it is dry in Greenland, and so on. The snow was melting fast, and caused the mountain stream running through the streets to rise and submerge parts of the plain. A flock of goats, looking very contented, were wandering in search of food, but, strangely enough, no dogs were seen —a circumstance we first understood when we were informed that the municipal council had resolved to extirpate all those animals, which had only been kept for the sake of their fur.

I succeeded in avoiding some of the festivity and making use of the fine weather which set in. In spite of the early season it was mild enough for me to work out of doors for days together, dressed in summer costume. The 24th of May was especially a charming day, calm, with bright sunshine, 61·25° Fahrenheit in the shade, and the evening glow was still brilliant when it met the clear light of next morning. With an overcast sky and the breeze, which we experienced during our stay, the temperature was still low; but indications of an approaching summer were numerous, and each day told on the snow.

One day, while seeking for subjects to paint, I came across the Moravian station, New Hernhut, here generally called Germany, and a sorrowful

Digitized by Google



THE STAG'S HORN. BY GODTHAAT.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

sight met my eyes in the scattered remains of a formerly important place. The last hunter had died during the winter, and the few inhabitants, sunk into hopeless pauperism, had during the whole winter subsisted on nothing but what they could beg from the Danes in Godthaab. The missionary's building, with a chapel at one end, towered over the ruins, and the missionaries' servants, boats, etc., were of the best description.

The history of the Moravian settlements in Greenland is, according to Dr. Rink, as follows:—"After ten years of struggle with hardships, privations, and difficulties of many kinds, Egede finally succeeded in establishing his settlement merely by founding it on the trifling, but nevertheless sure, profit that might be derived from the trade with the natives; at the same time bringing about a more friendly intercourse between the latter and the Europeans, and putting an end to the acts of violence which had more or less characterized the earlier expeditions to Greenland. When Egede had just got over the numerous troubles arising from the absurd plan of colonizing the country by convicts, another company of settlers arrived, who had formed the idea of joining him in his labours, but whose assistance proved a very doubtful boon to him.

"The Moravian brethren had already, immediately after the foundation of their society, been forming projects of founding missions in distant parts of the globe. The reputation of having entered on a crusade against paganism seemed quite requisite to give

Digitized by Google

their labours the apostolic appearance which was necessary for raising the new-founded sect in the opinion of the Christian world. No field could have been more suited to them than Greenland. Its very name had a most deterring sound to the great public ear, suggesting nothing but desolate icy regions, whose inhabitants were the rudest savages and pagans; while, on the other hand, the missionaries might expect to have their existence secured by the protection of the Danish Government and the vicinity of Egede's settlements. The first Moravian missionaries arrived in the year 1733, and took up their abode, which received the name of New Hernhut, at a place half a mile from Egede's settlement. In the Moravian accounts it is expressly set out how, even in their external appearance, they imitated the Apostles, being but common craftsmen, who were treated with disregard and scorn by their fellow-travellers. It must also be admitted that, in reality, these Moravians displayed no small degree of zeal and self-denial. During several years they suffered privations, being miserably supplied; and one year they did not even receive letters from their friends in Europe. It was not till the year 1738 that they succeeded in making their first convert.

"The history of Ultramontane papacy and Jesuitism hardly exhibits proofs of a more refined interference with personal liberty than the control to which the Moravians subjected this people, to whom a certain independence was of vital importance for the development of vigour and prosperity. Originally

Digitized by Google

they even tried to make their whole community settle down at the mission station close by their own houses. Cranz, a Moravian brother, who, in the year 1770, wrote a history of Greenland, calls the people who took up their abodes in these places 'sheep who were driven into their fold.'

"The Danish missionary, Glahn, in a critical commentary on Cranz, written about the year 1770, gives a striking picture of the extreme haughtiness and spiritual pride which lay hidden beneath the Germans' paternal care of their hyperborean brothers and sisters. As a curiosity, we may here quote an example.

"In olden times native women used to adorn their chin, knees, cheeks, hands, and feet with a sort of tattoo-mark. Concerning such marks, Cranz observes that 'such as had been baptized by the Moravians had already long ago left off this vanity, which, foolish though it be, nevertheless tends to sinful enticement.' Glahn comments upon this passage as follows :—'We might with as much reason assert that they have cast off their habit in order to have a better chance of capturing a Danish husband, it being well known that the Greenland women are foolish enough to prefer the worst Dane to the best Greenlander; or perhaps they may have done it only to imitate European females! . . . But, begging your pardon, author, why do you curl your hair, or powder and dress your peruke? Why have your clothes folds, and your shoes buckles? Why do you have your face shaved? . . . I think you would take it in bad

Digitized by Google

part if any one should venture to accuse you of trying to captivate whenever you shaved your beards or bought a couple of nice buckles, or were to maintain that such things were nothing but vanity, which, though foolish, could only tend to sinful enticement. Dear author, do request your brethren to have no concern whatever about the knees, cheeks, hands, and feet of the Greenland ladies! Let them abide in these or other external things as they are. But let them strive to adorn their hearts with chastity and other female virtues. This, however, is not to be attained without a thorough-going instruction; it requires more than the observing of certain customs.'

"Of another part, where Cranz has been censuring the festivals and entertainments of the Greenlanders, Glahn says, 'I really do not see anything sinful in it if, in the long winter night, a man entertains himself and other inmates of a house by beating his drum: nor that the refrain of a song, such as "*Anna Ejah*, oh! oh!" should be more blameable than the melody of a psalm: nor that a song of seal-hunting, which must be likened to a heroic poem for the encouragement of young people; nor singing a satirical song to his young friends merely for fun, by which, in a fair manner, he calls the attention of the friend to some faults of his; nor singing to children about the fights of animals, should be in any way discreditable.'

"The Moravians have four chief stations, besides two auxiliary ones, or outposts, and usually number twelve German teachers, of whom about eight are

Digitized by Google

ETERNITY FJORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

called missionaries, while the rest only officiate as assistants, at the same time preparing themselves for the position of missionary. When their pupilage has come to an end they return to Germany, in order to be ordained missionaries and marry. Afterwards, they usually revisit their native country, when their children have arrived at an age to be placed in the Moravian educational establishments; the missionaries themselves, however, go back, and generally remain in Greenland until old age. The Moravian Mission is maintained by charitable contributions; the Danish Government only contributes to it by granting a diminution in the freight to be paid by them for their goods. But it must be remembered that the natives contribute indirectly to their support by furnishing each station with ten or twelve serving-women, who constitute the crew of their boats, and are maintained by their own labour and by gifts from their countrymen.

"It appears somewhat strange to see a number of European missionary teachers, amounting to one for every hundred and sixty natives, employed in places in which, for the last half-century, scarcely any heathens have existed, and where the inhabitants are so closely connected with their countrymen in the Danish communities, that their remaining under the control of European missionaries, as regards their Church affairs, would be almost certain if ever the Moravian stations were given up, which might well be done, as they have now completed the task of converting the natives to Christianity. On taking into consideration the field which other

Digitized by Google

parts of the world offer to missionary undertakings, it appears evident that the Moravians are bestowing more care on Greenland than on any other country. The reason is what they call the 'historical importance' of their Greenland stations, their work being supported by charitable contributions, which again depend on their reputation or their credit, derived from a favourable public opinion. The interest which the European public take in their work is to a great extent maintained by the number and the dispersion of their missionary stations over the world, and by the obstacles and hardships which are supposed to be encountered by their missionaries in these places. An atlas has been published, showing the surface of the globe in its relation to the Moravian establishments; and the United Brethren endeavour to keep up the interest bestowed upon them by eulogizing, both in writings and in speeches, the deeds of their missionaries down to the present day. For a century and a half the name of Greenland has rendered marvellous service in increasing the reputation of the sect. When we remember that European travellers are still able to discover proofs of martyrdom in the settlements of the society in Greenland, it is not to be wondered that to the great public in Germany the former country is now just in the same state as at the time of Cranz. Those accustomed to attend the Church festivals in Hernhut, when lectures are given on the history of the Greenland mission, would never be able to comprehend the reasons given above to prove these settlements to be now superfluous.

Digitized by Google

Abandoning them, therefore, would be the same as subverting one of the pillars by which the credit and the prosperity of the Moravian missionary work is supported. For this reason the missionaries not only watch their flocks in Greenland, lest individuals should pass to the Danish communities, but, in order to maintain the present number of their own stations, they try to keep them as detached from one another as possible, preventing marriages between individuals belonging to different stations; and when a family removes to the confines of another station, they continue to be noted in the census as still properly belonging to the former community.

"It cannot be denied that the early history of the settlements can boast of men who displayed great activity and self-devotion in their desire to benefit the Greenlanders as well as their own country, but such martyrdom has long ceased to exist in Greenland. Nevertheless, the idea of self-sacrifice still clings to it, and, thanks to the efforts of Cranz, the Moravians rank highest amongst those men who are still believed to lead a life full of privations and self-denial for the benefit of the poor Greenlanders. Consequently they may serve as an illustration of a feature of Greenland life. If a closer examination should deprive them of a portion of their reputation for self-sacrifice, the other settlers in Greenland will have to share the same fate.

"It must be remembered that the Moravians in Greenland are now merely officials, who, on entering upon an engagement, have secured for themselves a maintenance for the rest of their lives, and often

Digitized by Google

rise, by the aid of their missionary career, from the humblest positions to a considerable degree of respectability in their mother country. They are protected against the severity of the climate by houses which, more than any other dwellings in Greenland, are constructed with a view to comfort and convenience, and they are bountifully furnished with provisions of every description by their European friends. As each household consists of two or three families, and their social arrangements are very conducive to comfort, they are in this respect, as a rule, better provided for than Danish settlers in general, and pay extraordinary attention to their domestic affairs. They are so far from having any heathens to convert, that, on the contrary, the natives who constitute their communities have already for generations been trained up in implicit obedience to their teachers, and with more reason might be called their slaves or servants than their persecutors as supporters of paganism. The fraternal organization of their own society is little in accordance with the position which they have granted to the natives on incorporating them in their communities, inasmuch as they even surpass any other class of European race in degrading them to a set of subordinate beings. As far as regards the propagation of the Christian faith amongst their 'brethren' in Greenland, the Moravian Mission is an obsolete institution, and the renown which they still derive from it is merely founded on ancient tradition and modern misapprehension."

The difference in character between the Scandi-

Digitized by Google

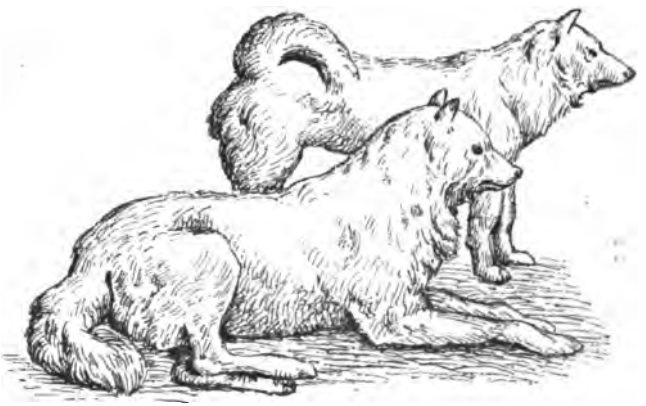
SCENE IN ETERNITY FJORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

navian and the German, in respect to their intercourse with foreign nations, has probably never been better illustrated than in Greenland; and English readers may well wonder that the Moravians have been allowed to remain when their influence on the Greenlanders has proved so fatal to them.

One of New Hernhut's two missionaries came on board the steamer to go home by her, and told us,



DOGS.

in the course of a conversation, that the brethren had tried to establish a mission in the Cumberland Islands, but had been driven away by the whalers.

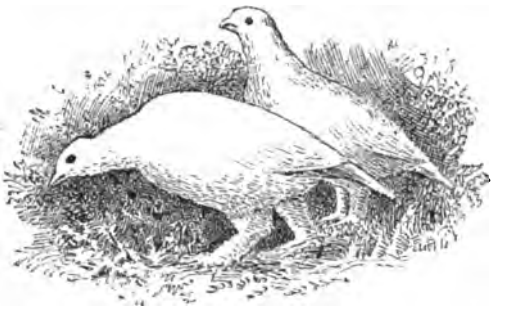
On the 25th, at noon, the vessel was ready; the mineralogist and the botanist started for the south coast, and we put to sea to go to Holstenborg. Next day we enjoyed the view of rocks and fjords in the district of Sukkertoppen, to me old acquaintances awakening memories and longings.

We reached Holstenborg in the bright morning

Digitized by Google

while new ice was forming in the bay. All was quiet on shore until the anchor dropped and the chain rattled out, the noise causing a dog to begin to howl, and people to poke their heads out of doors, go to their boats, and row off. Soon, also, the pilot came on board, telling us that the winter had been mild, but had brought much starvation. In the north and in the inner fjords the ice had not yet disappeared.

Digitized by Google



PTARMIGAN.

CHAPTER VII.

I meet old friends—Pay a visit to Sarfanguak—A Greenlander who is too soft-hearted to strike a seal—Ivar's tent—Beautiful scenery—Scotch whalers—A sailor's funeral—I go north with an anthropologist—We camp at Ukivik and cross North Strōm fjord—A walrus embedded in ice—Strangers—A man who had lost his nose and one hand by frost-bite—Aito and its outposter—A town that lived half a year on a dead whale—Sad cases of men crippled by exposure—Kangitsiak—Why the dogs were so thin—Egedesminde—North Greenland does not follow the fashion of the south—The outposter on Dog Island, who for fifty years had not seen five of his countrymen at one time—Anthropological studies are sometimes difficult in Greenland—The black spot—Eskimo names for other nations—Ikamiut—Growth checked by starvation—Suicide—Among the Christianshaab—Dog disease—Warm winds—North Greenlanders proud of their winter—Claushavn.

COMPARED to the spring of 1884, the mild season was far advanced. Then it was still winter, and all the coasts were ice-fringed and mountains and lowlands were covered with snow. Now there was but little snow to be seen, and the grass peeping forth everywhere gave each day a stronger green tone to the slopes, plains, and the turf walls of the houses. The general appearance of the place had not undergone any change, and among the population I found

Digitized by Google

several old friends, while some had died and others moved away.

Our crew of 1884 had not all fared well. The two kayakers were independent hunters and supporters of families. The curly-headed stroke was picking up a living as fisherman in a small way, and doing odd jobs for the Danes; while the bow oar had become a "Reader" at Sarfanguak, with a salary of ten krones a year. He was about the last of the lot whom I suspected of being familiar with any sort of learning, but still the honour had been bestowed upon him of teaching the children. The steerer had been sick, and age was telling hard on the poor man, who was utterly unable to fish or hunt any longer; but the worst situated was Noah, who now had changed the colour of big Elizabeth's ribbon from black with vivid colours to a uniform blue. The hunting instinct in that man was much below that of the average of mankind, and he had consequently sunk into helpless poverty, and finally gone to Sarfanguak by the assistance of the municipal council, where he tried to make a living by fishing. When I met him there, I was hardly able to recognize the sallow-complexioned young oldster who came to greet me. Another man who had received aid to go to a relation at an outpost station was said to be a really good kayaker and a fair harpooner, but was possessed by so much sympathy for animals that he was unable to strike a seal whenever it looked at him, and consequently never fetched any home.

As far as Sarfanguak the Amerdlok was open.

Digitized by Google

A NATIVE NURSE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The angmaset had arrived there, and it was said that reindeer were plentiful this year.

On my way back from this place I landed, on account of rain, on a promontory where I again met an old acquaintance encamped. It was Ivar. He and his family were, as usual, well clad and well fed, while the dogs were friendly and more like the dogs of Europeans than those of the average Greenlanders, who, as a rule, get more kicks than kindness. His tent was as clean and orderly as ever, and flesh and fish lay spread on the rocks. The collected, unostentatious manner of this man would make him agreeable everywhere, and I spent a pleasant afternoon in his company. When he was offered a glass of brandy, he said, "Oh yes! I feel I am getting old and sometimes long for a glass. In my young days I never cared about it." However agreeable our society with warm coffee was to Ivar, he no sooner saw some whales than he and his two sons went in a kayak to pursue them, and I feel convinced that nothing short of an accident would cause him to neglect his duty. Undoubtedly, if the Eskimos were all of his type, there would be happiness where one now meets with misery.

On the same trip I landed on the large island to the south of the fjord. A broad salmon stream flowed into a bay, and, on ascending a couple of hundred feet, a landscape appeared that would have delighted the eye of a settler, if it had been in a milder climate. A lake was visible in the interior, and the surrounding hills were low and to a great extent overgrown by heather, grass, moss, and flowers.

Digitized by Google

It is difficult to understand how it is that no serious attempts at raising cattle should have been made here, where grass and turnips may be cultivated with ease, where there is peat for fuel in abundance, and where the waters are rich in fish. Cows and goats are kept by some colonies, which are all situated on the outer coast, where opportunity for procuring fodder is the least favourable. Those who have tramped about in Greenland see grass of vigorous growth, and are led to believe that a little labour would produce great results. At all events, the ancient Norsemen considered the land not to be without value, and proved that they, with the scanty resources of their time, were able to make themselves happy homes there. Some people even claim that forest trees might be made to grow in South Greenland, a matter on which I am unable to form an opinion.

The clergyman of Holstenborg, the Rev. Mr. Chemnitz, is a native who has been educated and ordained in Copenhagen, a talented and pious man who speaks Danish without an accent; but his very blonde wife, the daughter of a Dane from Godthaab, was not to be persuaded to pronounce a word in her father's tongue, and dressed throughout in native costume. He was busy digging his garden and preparing it for the coming summer.

The port of Holstenborg was visited by two Scotch whalers, one of which left the harbour when a sufficient supply of water had been taken on board. The other had the dead body of a mate on board, who had been shot accidentally by his own musket.

Digitized by Google

He was buried in the little churchyard, whalers digging his grave and rowing him on shore in procession with all their boats, while the other vessels and the shore flag-station had their flags half-mast high. English hymns were sung at the grave, and the clergyman performed the service in the Danish language.

On board the ship also was a patient in a high fever, suffering from inflammation of the lungs, who was removed to the sick-house on shore, where he was left in the care of the physician from Godthaab, who happened to be visiting the place. The man was rapidly recovering when I left.

The anthropologist was to go by sea to North Greenland, and it was agreed that I was to accompany him. When, on the 7th of June, some kayakers had arrived from the north and had announced that the waters there were open, we left Holstenborg in a skin-boat and were soon among the islands. The weather, though raw and thick, nevertheless permitted us to have an occasional fine glimpse of the interior, and it was especially pleasing to look into the North Kangerdluarsuk, where the view of the lofty mountains inland, with the sun shining on them, contrasted strongly with that of the outer coast, with clouds hanging cold and dark over the shore. The first evening we landed on the island of Ukivik and pitched our tent. This island contained many old ruins of houses; the rock was rich in garnets, and the sand in its bays was purple, consisting almost entirely of these crystals.

Digitized by Google

The next day, on account of snow, we only made four miles, landing this time on the mainland, where an eagle circled about our tent. Flocks of eider-ducks flew by us, long-tailed ducks floated on the mountain lakes, and snipe waded in the moors. Footprints of foxes and reindeer antlers were met with everywhere, and the peculiar cackling of the ptarmigan was heard among the hills. At the entrance of the bay, by the side of which our tent stood, an iceberg of considerable dimensions had stranded, and from time to time during the night it kept up a continual roaring whilst giving off small pieces, until it finally broke up entirely with a thunder-like crash.

Until 1759, when Holstenberg was founded, there was a trading station in this vicinity, very favourable for whaling, but with a most unpleasant climate, rain and snowstorms prevailing during the summer. When, the following day, a southerly wind sprang up, we sailed across the entrance of North Ström fjord—"the much dreaded," as it has been called—and landed by twelve o'clock in a bay on the mainland to lunch. A fox sped away when we arrived, and footprints of his kindred were very numerous both in the snow and sand, and it was not long before we discovered their pantry of walrus carcases. A closer examination of the spot proved it to be a much-frequented resting-place for walrus, which were numerous here. The rocks near the coast were worn smooth, and every crack was filled with the peculiar round pebbles, of the size of a walnut, which those animals are supposed to swallow, together with clams and mussels.

Digitized by Google

There was great glee among our men when we found an enormous walrus lying dead, half buried in ice. The flesh was well preserved, and our crew, cutting out large lumps, made a meal there and then, also bringing a considerable load of it on board. The foxes had not touched it, as they had probably found it too fresh and had plenty of more highly flavoured provisions. In the afternoon, resuming our voyage, we passed the island where the largest walrus grounds are found, and where the Greenlanders assemble in September and often have a good catch.

The weather continued unfavourable, with frequent snow showers, and a heavy atmosphere concealed the probable beauties of the landscape from our view. Next day brought calm weather and a clear sky, and we passed between flat and uninteresting islands and reefs, with ice covering many of the inlets, ice-fringed bays, and an increasing number of stranded icebergs. We met people in a skin-boat from Aito on their way to a salmon river, and we landed and conversed with them for an hour. Their steerer was an elderly man who had lost nose, upper lip, and one hand by frostbite. By his son-in-law, a Danish-speaking Greenlander, I was later informed how this accident happened. One cold day he had gone to the shop, situated some two miles from where he lived. On his way he became dizzy, and ran round and round till he fell. Fortunately he was observed, and carried half dead into a house, where life returned in the warm room to all except the above-mentioned parts, which were

Digitized by Google

beyond recovery. One eye had also been seriously damaged by the frost.

At Aito we were first surprised by the beautiful situation of the place, and farther on by the cheerful and comfortable appearance of the outposter's house. I had been accustomed to see neatness and all home comforts, even luxury, displayed in the Danish houses at the colonies, but had only met one Danish outposter, and although his house bore witness of his native wife being an excellent housekeeper, he lived in a semi-Eskimo manner. I therefore had come to believe that Europeans in general, and females especially, would be entirely out of place in such a remote part of the world, if they did not adopt the Eskimo way of living, and that civilized people had to lead a life full of privations. The contrary proved to be the case here, where contentment and love of home were to be traced everywhere. Both the outside and inside were neat and cheerful. A painted rail fence surrounded the garden, and the flowers in the rooms, which seem to be inseparable from Danish ideas of a home, were treated with a care that proved how cherished they were.

When standing by this house, the eye wandered over the surroundings, with turf huts between the *kjökken möddings*, and one was struck by the contrast; and the idea occurred, that as these Danes, so might the Greenlanders live if they themselves chose. Indeed, one finds it both ludicrous and pitiful to behold them, like so many badgers, crawling in and out of holes in the turf wall.

Digitized by Google

"He will run in debt and ruin himself," a man confided to me, speaking of the outposter. "He is too good. He gives and lends to everybody who asks him."

The number of inhabitants is about ninety. Of these twenty were at home, and even out of these several would have been away if our arrival had not been expected, and a crew to carry us farther had already formed itself.

"Is it not singular that these Europeans have been able to invent such things?" exclaimed a man when our goods were landed.

"But what queer people they must be to need so much," replied another.

Two boats laden with blubber landed their cargoes while we were there. They were from a drift-whale which had been found last autumn, and had supplied the population with blubber and flesh during the whole winter, for which reason there had been no want of any kind. I saw several cripples. One man was lame. He had been upset in a kayak, and, being unable to right the boat, was apparently a corpse, when his comrade towed him on shore, where he covered him with snow. When people next day came with a boat to fetch away the body—the thermometer then was near zero—they were surprised to find him crawling about on the rocks with his wet clothes frozen on him. Another man had broken his leg while in the mountains gathering rose-roots (*Sedum rhodiola*), and lay long before he was found. Besides these, there were many suffering from eyes injured by frost and from snow-blindness.

Digitized by Google

For the first time this year I saw the midnight sun, here colouring the lower edges of the clouds purple and throwing a golden hue over the striking "Reef Col" Mountain to the south.

On the 12th, when the weather was clear, we left Aito with a fresh crew. We did not, however, get far that day, as a northerly wind arose, compelling us to land on one of the outer islands. A fox was observed to make haste for the mountains when we arrived. To judge by the number of footprints in the snow, there must be many of these animals, or the same one must have exercised itself considerably. What, however, a fox, not to mention many foxes, had to exist upon, be the fare ever so economical, unless it was able to eat seaweed and driftwood, was a puzzle to me; for this place, as well as the other outer islands where we touched on this journey, was remarkably barren and destitute of birds.

After a few delays, caused by showers and cold weather, we reached Kangitsiak, another outpost to Egedesminde. As at Aito, there were many fair-haired people with features and carriage reminding one of the Bedouin Arabs.

The outposter was a very different sort of man to the one at Aito. He cared about nothing but the shop and house, and his dogs were next to skeletons from starvation. His wife had been left behind in Copenhagen, he told us. She had not been willing to come out when he engaged himself as a cooper to the Greenland trade. "But I don't care; I make the best of it," he said. "I am always happy and of good cheer. Be welcome. I am glad you came;

Digitized by Google

you probably have some provisions, for I have only half a dozen gulls' eggs left in the cupboard."

"How do you manage without provisions?"

"Why, when I have not any I am compelled to do without them. There is no one in the place to buy any from. The people have all gone after angmaset."

"Why are your dogs so thin?"

"They may well be thin, when I don't feed them. I have not anything to give them."

"Have you no salmon?"

"The salmon is all gone after angmaset."

"There must be codfish in these waters?"

"The codfish have all gone after angmaset, and so have the frog-fish. There is not a thing in the neighbourhood."

No wonder the warm meal and a cup of coffee put him in high spirits. His remarkable adventures in the land were legion; and he was enjoying a glass of "toddy" and singing a tolerably bad song of his own composition, describing a sledge ride from colony to colony around the Gulf of Disco, when a schooner from Egedesminde arrived and put an end to the entertainment. While goods were being discharged and a cargo of blubber taken on board, the Læso skipper put in an appearance. "Drop those stories of yours," said the outspoken sailor, using a naval term. "We know each other; let us talk business. Confound that whale blubber! Is there any more of that stuff? I am going home this year; my three years are up. Will you sell me that sealskin carpet for six krones?"

Digitized by Google

"Not I."

"Why, you never paid more than two krones for it when you bought it from Luise in the hungry time. I can see it is her make, and a fine pattern it is too."

After having supplied the outposter's pantry for a short time, we were not sorry to leave Kangitsiak the next day by the schooner, which took us to Egedesminde in a few hours. The country thereabouts is without any striking beauty. When I was there the sky was overcast, and there were occasional showers, by no means adding to the charms of the place, which is at the extremity of the Disco Gulf. The raw temperature of Davis Straits, or rather Baffin's Bay, meets here the continental atmosphere of the inner gulf, causing the air to be more foggy and moist than at other places in Greenland. It was my first visit to a colony in North Greenland, and the difference in dress, especially on the part of women, was striking. The language is also said to be different, as well as the customs and habits of the natives. "Such is not customary here; it is south Greenlandish, and does not concern us," was a remark which we frequently heard, and we soon realized the fact that south and north considered themselves two different nations and states.

On a trip to Dog Island we had to touch at the island of Magnetok on account of contrary winds, and I had a fair opportunity of wandering over the hilly land, sprinkled with numerous ruins of houses, mountains, lakes, and rocks of red granite. Vegeta-

Digitized by Google

A BIRD ROCK.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

tion was but scanty, but at intervals a willow was seen.

When the weather cleared we proceeded, and, scudding along past steep bird rocks and imposing icebergs, Disco-land appeared lofty and distinct at a distance of thirty-six miles. The Dog islanders are known to be capable people. They are a greatly mixed race, and often tall and powerful. We had to return to Egedesminde to procure a boat for exploring the gulf, and experienced some difficulty, as most of the inhabitants had gone to their summer abodes; but we finally succeeded in borrowing one and forming a crew on the 23rd of June, a week after our arrival.

The old outposter from Dog Island accompanied us back to the colony. He had come to Greenland more than fifty years ago, had married there, and was now a widower, proud of "his" Greenlanders, of whom some ten per cent. or more might truly be said to be his, as they were his own children or grandchildren. When he was asked by his superior to drink the inevitable glass of wine which is offered throughout Greenland on visiting a colony, he exclaimed, on seeing five of his countrymen assembled, "I feel as though I were in Denmark. I don't know of ever having met so many of my countrymen at once, except when a ship has been in port. I have longed to see old Denmark once more, but if it were not for my old sister I really would never care to go, as I feel quite satisfied here." Steamers were unknown when he left home, and he had never had the luck of seeing one since. When, later in the

Digitized by Google

summer, it was announced at Dog Island that the *Hvidbjornen* had arrived, he hurried to Egedesminde to see her, but came too late. The agent's wife expressed her regrets at his disappointment; to which he replied that he was quite satisfied with having seen the smoke and a large piece of the hull.

Rumours travel in Greenland in an incredibly short space of time. Long before we ourselves arrived, the news of our coming had reached Egedesminde, and the most exaggerated tales about our doings were related. My breech-loading gun and sketches were objects of marvel; and as to the anthropologist, who measured the heads of Greenlanders and robbed old graves of skulls, the natives were quite bewildered as to his intentions towards them. When the report spread that he would prove them to be Eskimos, they all avoided him, and at Egedesminde neither cigars nor biscuits were sufficiently enticing to make anybody allow him to inspect his head. They gave no belief to the assertion that the king wished to know how clever they were. For all they knew, he might want to make soldiers of them, if they were fit! The peculiar black spot on young Eskimo babies I several times had an opportunity of seeing, when the anthropologist asked the mothers to show it. According to that authority, only Japanese and Eskimos are known to have it. It is a diamond-shaped spot below the small of the back. The child is almost white, with the exception of this spot of a bluish-black colour, from which a yellowish shade seems to spread to all parts of the body, until it finally disappears when the child is a couple of

Digitized by Google

WINTER HUT, BY EGEDESMINDE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

years old. A child with a distinct regular mark was supposed to be healthy. The half-castes are often born with it, though in their case it is not so regularly shaped as in that of pure Eskimos.

When we left here we went east, following the southern coast of the gulf, where it seemed strange to find vegetation becoming more vigorous the farther we advanced. A collection of islands covered by greensward seemed quite out of place, and in imagination we were transported to a European scene. The very terns and the ringed plovers assisted in heightening the illusion, and only some grazing sheep and a straw-thatched hut were required to complete the picture. For this likeness the Greenlanders must have had an eye when they called one of the islands "Nuna Kavdlunak," which translated means Denmark.

The Greenlander's names for other nations are somewhat peculiar. Danes, like the ancient Norsemen, are called "Kavdlunak" (those with the uncommon eyebrows), or "Ukisut" (those who remain in the country during the winter), and Englishmen are "Tuluwit," from English hard bread being called *tuluk;* while other nations—Americans, French, Swedes, etc.—have very much the same names as in Danish. The Greenlanders themselves are "Inuit," or "people."

The coast became gradually lower, and for a long stretch to the east the inland ice was visible. It was past midnight when we ran into the little bay of Ikamiut. We were making preparations to pitch our tent, when we heard a female voice on the shore

Digitized by Google

call out in Danish, "No, you must come up; father sleeps alone." It was the outposter's daughter and an old acquaintance of mine. We followed her, and were led into a wooden house built much in the Eskimo style, with a wooden ledge of the size of half the room, whereon lay a white-bearded descendant of Vikings, the very ideal picture of some of his ancestors. He was ailing in his legs and could not get up to receive us, but if we would spread our blankets alongside of him we were welcome to do so. We gladly accepted the invitation aud were soon sound asleep. We had been told beforehand that he was the man to bring forth the most surprising rarities in the way of wines and other drinks, although he himself was sobriety itself. He had spent his whole life in Greenland, had been married twice, and had ten daughters, but no sons. Consequently the girls had all learnt to handle a gun, to drive a team, and to do the work of men in general. They were now married and settled far and wide, except the two youngest—the one who could speak Danish (she had stayed with a clergyman's family a winter in Denmark), and the youngest of all, the father's pet and spoilt by all her sisters. In conversing with the old man, I found him in possession of a more thorough knowledge of seals than anybody I knew of. He was acquainted with all their peculiarities in the way of migrating, collecting food, breeding, and so forth. In short, he had studied the seals, having had a good opportunity of learning their habits, for he had lived at most outpost stations in North

Digitized by Google

Greenland and been an able hunter himself, equal to the best of the natives. Age had begun to tell on him, and he found it difficult to go in a kayak. Having no sons, he sometimes had to go without fresh provisions for a long time, falling back on the old salt provisions in the shop, which, together with his not being able to move about as usual, had caused scurvy to attack him in winter. I had met the daughter Eleonora when she stayed in Denmark, and I had asked her how she liked it, to which she answered, in her imperfect language, that Greenland was best. When I now asked if she was happy at having come home, she replied, "Yes, on account of my father; but Greenland is horrible."

From Ikamiut, which is situated on an island, one has a fair look over the south-east bay, with the low surrounding lands and the inland ice. We see the place where Nordenskiold ascended, and the place where Nansen intended to descend when he would come from the east coast.

In the anthropologist's endeavours to collect material for philosophical notes on the Eskimo people, he had gathered the scanty remains of the population around his cigar-boxes and bread-basket, thus I had a chance of viewing those who had remained at home. One family especially attracted my attention. From living in a state of perpetual starvation, the children had come to be the smallest people I had ever seen. The father had once upon a time been an able man, but, crushed by misfortune, his spirits had been broken, and he had lost all ambition beyond recovery. He possessed neither

Digitized by Google

kayak, gun, nor anything wherewith to make a living, and seemed not to care any longer what became of him or his offspring. He wore a few rags, but the wife and children were almost naked, and instead of a house he had built up a sheltered hovel of turf, compared to which the cask of Diogenes was a palace. Of suicides among natives there are very few accounts. At one place I heard of a woman burying herself alive with her child by jumping into a cleft, from whence it had been impossible to extricate her, and where she quietly lay down and managed somehow to cover herself and the child with stones. Signs of life were observed for many days after. The usual custom of a person tired of existence is to quit all human society and wander away into the interior.

On our way to Christianshaab we met flocks of seals playing about, and jumping clear out of water one over another. Snow was not seen anywhere. The mountains here are steep, with broad green valleys between them, and a short distance to the north of the colony a deep salmon river cuts into the land. Salmon is not nearly so plentiful here as in the south. A contagious disease had raged last winter among the dogs in North Greenland, consisting of a sort of madness somewhat akin to hydrophobia, and causing death within one or two days. Opinions differ as to the origin of the disease, some believing it to be caused by the dogs being fed on shark's flesh, while others assert that ill-treatment of the dogs has much to do with its origin. When dogs have been fed on frozen shark's

Digitized by Google

flesh for some length of time, a peculiar complaint sets in. They become torpid and sluggish, their ears begin to drop, they stagger about, and finally fall into convulsions, from which, however, they generally recover in a few hours.

Owing to ill-usage and starvation the Greenlanders' dogs are usually but little tamer than wolves, and there had been several cases of their having killed and even devoured people. A boy had been attacked and eaten on the sledge by his own team; a woman had been killed; and a boy, crawling on all-fours picking berries, had been severely torn.

The weather had become mild in the latter part of June, and simultaneously the mosquitoes arrived, embittering our existence on the finest days. An oppressive warm south-easter blew fresh at Christianshaab on the 27th, reminding me not a little of the warm desert winds of North Africa, with the difference that here the air was clear, while during a khamsin it is a thick grey, without a cloud in the sky. Here it came in sudden gusts, producing, according to the statements of both Danes and natives, oppression of spirits and a feeling of sickness. This wind is the most remarkable in Greenland, and appears as frequently in winter as in summer, in the south as in the north. When its direction changes from south-east to north-east, it having passed over the ice-covered interior wall, during the coldest season it will in a few hours change the temperature from – 35·5° to + 45·5 Fahrenheit, causing snow to vanish without any water

Digitized by Google

being visible. It will sometimes turn into a sudden gale, and at other times blow a gentle breeze, accompanied either by rain or by a clear sky. It is most disagreeable in the winter, not only from the relatively oppressive heat, but also from finally changing into south-west gales, with intense cold and snow. According to the statements of Holm and Garde, the east coast has warm winds as well as the west, but on the east the warm wind is westerly, the south-east being among the colder. In spite of all, people declared that winter was the real good time in North Greenland. It was the sociable season, when families from neighbouring colonies came on a visit and stayed a fortnight at a time. There was always something astir, and sleighing and ski-running were the greatest of all sports. "I would not live in South Greenland, where they do not know what a dog sledge is, and never see anybody the whole winter. It is even worse than in Europe. Who has not spent a year here does not know what Greenland is," a man told me. It has, on the other hand, happened to me that a man, after praising the blessings of winter, would at another time exclaim, "You may well be delighted with a stay in Greenland, coming in spring and leaving in the autumn. You enjoy the best season, and leave before the darkness, the solitude, and other hardships set in."

The anthropologist was to go by ship from here to Umanak, and we parted at Claushavn. It appeared that all the outposters in the gulf were veterans. This one, Mr. Jansen, had been a soldier

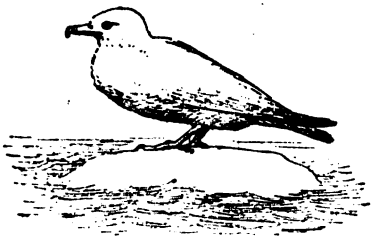
Digitized by Google

in the war against Germany forty years previously, and had been in Greenland after that. He had been married twice, both times to Danish wives, and had brought up a large family. He had lived for many years at Tasiusak, in 73° 24′ N. lat., the most northern trading station on this earth, had the reputation of having been a firstrate hunter in his young days, and had probably killed more bears than any man alive.

I was rowed over, or, properly speaking, around the entrance of the immense ice-fjord, where icebergs of the largest kind are launched. They come drifting with the current, and strand on a bank outside the fjord, whence they are at times pressed out by those behind them. As they express it here, the fjord shoots them out; and it can shoot out very far at times.

CORMORANT.

Digitized by Google



A RESTING GULL.

CHAPTER VIII.

Jakobshavn ice-fjord—Sword-fish—I am troubled by mosquitoes—Disco-land as a barometer—The Rev. Mr. Rasmussen and his servant Godman—Greenlanders travel out to see the world, and I go with them—The island of Tusak—Kittiwakes and puffins have taken possession of the lands—Godman relates his hunting adventures—Kronprins's Islands—We cross Disco Strait and reach Godhavn—Trap mountains—Walrus-hunt in the harbour.

THE aspect of the ice-fjord is powerfully striking, and is especially attractive to the visitor seeing it for the first time. The scenes are peculiar to these northern latitudes, and in savage wildness they surpass everything on earth. The colours are of the very tenderest, and violet, blue, green, and even reddish tones blend without losing in brilliancy. The forms are most fantastical, changing from day to day, nay, from hour to hour, never monotonous, but always displaying new figures. The fjord is so closely packed that it is impossible to pass in a straight line from coast to coast, and the bergs are so high that one must go a good way up the hills to get a view of it. From the "Holms bakke," at Jakobshavn, we see it beneath our feet

Digitized by Google

STRANDED ICEBERGS IN JAKOBSHAVNS FJORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

like a mighty frozen river, roaring and thundering when the crystal mountains strike and crush one another.

Seals are plentiful hereabouts, and both Claushavn and Jakobshavn are much frequented by seal-hunters. At the first-named place seventeen seals were towed on shore the day I spent there. It is sometimes claimed that seals keep close to the ice in order to avoid the sword-fish, which is unable to chase them there, while it drives them away from many other parts of the gulf. Wherever it appears the chase is stopped for a long time, and the very kayakers fear it and seek the shore the minute they see it. It is a tooth whale, and probably one of the most ferocious animals in existence. It is said that it can swallow a seal, skinning it with its teeth in sucking it in, and spitting the skin out afterwards. The name is derived from a tall fin on its back, somewhat resembling a scimitar sword.

Jakobshavn is partly situated in a narrow bay, and partly facing the Disco Gulf. Formerly there was a seminary here. The number of mosquitoes had increased largely, and often compelled me to go several miles to sea in order to obtain sufficient rest to do my work. They disappeared entirely on the advent of rain or wind, but were as hungry in the night as during the day. I noticed the sad distressed state the dogs were in from these blood-thirsty animals. From scratching themselves after the bites they made large rents in their ears and other parts of the skin, the mosquitoes settling on top of each other in the wounds, never allowing the

Digitized by Google

place to heal. Wherever a dog had hidden itself in the tall grass, it would be visible by a dense cloud of mosquitoes swarming over the spot.

The weather appeared much better here than on the open coast, a fact which I often had an occasion of observing. Towards Egedesminde, where the land was concealed below the horizon, I could see by the clouds that they often had storms and rain which did not reach us, and at other times I saw fog-banks in the same direction, while the weather at Jakobshavn was calm, with bright and warm sunshine.

Disco-land is a fine background to the panorama of the gulf, visible from here—a panorama changing in appearance very often, and always seeming new. As the sky, ocean, and ice vary, so do the tones of the mountains. At times they look distant, grey or blue, resembling an ice-covered tableland, but at other times they seem quite near, with deep clefts, valleys, and a multitude of forms which we have not discovered before. Again, the sun's rays would break through the clouds, colouring some violet and red, while others were concealed by drifting masses of fog. A form appears and vanishes again, and the whole scene seems to be animated. In those distant mountains, with their variation of aspects, the Jakobshavners have a trustworthy barometer.

The missionary residing at Jakobshavn, the Rev. Mr. Rasmussen, superintends three missionary establishments. His annual journeys to visit the various parts of his district aggregate about twelve hundred miles, of which a portion can only be performed in

Digitized by Google

GODMAN.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

winter. He was going to Disco, and invited me to accompany him thither, which invitation I was glad to receive, as this distant island every day grew more attractive.

The Rev. Mr. Rasmussen had his own servant for a steerer, a Greenlander by the name of Godman, which name he was unable to pronounce, but called it "Gooeemight." This man had been in the missionary's employ during all the fourteen years he had worked in Greenland, and was the very ideal of a true old servant, who, in Greenland as in other parts of the world, is sometimes a despot as well. His main business when at home was to supply the kitchen with water, which duty he performed in such a manner as to make the women declare that they never lacked water unless Godman was at home. When away, his old wife would carry the pail on her head, and could perform several trips to the well a day; but it must be acknowledged that it was not necessary that she should light her pipe twenty times every half-hour. Godman was, nevertheless, indispensable, and he knew it, especially as he was a skilful dog-driver in the winter, and his master had the utmost confidence in him as a navigator. I hoped that his skill in the former profession might be beyond doubt; in the latter his specialty was carefulness. The rest of the crew were all sorts of men. Two were promising hunters, some eighteen or twenty years of age, whose round faces displayed health and good humour. They could do better by staying at home, but had resolved to take the opportunity of seeing

Digitized by Google

the world and improving their minds by travel. It was a happy crew altogether, and many were the dry jokes cracked by the steerer, who was captain for the occasion, and always punctually obeyed by his men. The wooden sloop was the missionary's property; but had it been Godman's nearest and dearest relation he evidently could not have felt a tenderer love for it, and we altogether, both boat and men, might feel ourselves perfectly safe under his protection.

The clergyman's son, a lad of ten, was also of the party. Having been born in Greenland, he naturally spoke the language of the country to perfection, and was the pet of the men, whose society he, as a bright boy, at all times preferred to any other, and whom he was always busy in assisting.

We came away on the 24th, and reached the same day a camping ground north of the Christianshaab salmon river, where we camped on heather, amidst berries and flowers, close by a murmuring stream. Fresh prints of reindeer feet close to the tent proved that some of those animals had lately visited the lowlands, and it is probable that our arrival had scared them away. The reindeer is said to suffer greatly from mosquito bites during the summer, and sometimes seeks the water to have a plunge. While there were none of those animals in the country at the back of Jakobshavn, they are plentiful here, and may be found at all places and in all seasons. The very experienced Godman, when consulted as to the footprints, informed us, among other things, that they could smell with

Digitized by Google

their feet. He himself had seen a deer, on crossing the track where he had passed, make a jump and start off at a gallop. There was a name which Godman would not mention, and that was the name Peter. Whenever he had an occasion to do so, he would say, "You, or he whose name I must not mention;" and it was some time before I learnt that he had had a son whose name was Peter, who had died, and, according to old superstition, he was forbidden for ever afterwards to mention that name. We learn from the account of Holm's and Garde's visit to the east coast, that there all who had known a deceased person were forbidden ever to pronounce his name; and as people were called after animals or other things, new names had continually to be invented, which caused great difficulties to the interpreter of the expedition.

Greenlanders seldom make a straight line for the place to which they want to go, not even in a good wooden boat, but prefer to follow the coast, even if it carries them ever so far out of their way. We therefore did not go direct to Disco, but came all the way to the south-east bay by Christianshaab, Egedesminde, and from there by Dog Island, Kronprins's Islands, and then across the strait to Godhavn. We camped on the beautiful island of Tusak, where the remains of a small whale lay washed on shore. There was here a hatching-place for skuas, and at one end of the island, which is some two miles long, on a steep cliff, were gulls and razor-billed auks. On the highest spots I found fox-traps of the peculiar simple Eskimo construction,

Digitized by Google

by which a stone crushes the animal when it touches the bait. Each place where we landed displayed new and interesting features. Sometimes it was a small island where thousands of kittiwakes darkened the air and filled it with their cries. They only permitted occasional eider-ducks to build their nests where they had taken possession of the spot; gulls and other birds were driven away by the plucky little terns, if they dared to come too near.

Again we camped on a spot with steep cliffs and deep freshwater lakes, where northern divers and long-tailed ducks were laying eggs, and on a low little island the whole greensward was undermined by holes resembling those dug by rabbits. These holes were made by puffin auks, which here had their nests, and swarmed around the island like bees around a hive.

One evening I had strolled far away among the mountain lakes, where the big northern divers were hatching their eggs, when I found one of their nests and brought the eggs with me back to camp. The day's work was done, and the crew were congregated around the fire, watching the process of cooking dinner. Godman, as usual, was smoking the pipe that would not keep alight for five minutes together. On seeing the eggs and hearing of the birds, that worthy was reminded of one of his former expeditions, the story of which he narrated for the benefit of the crew, while I had it translated by the boy. "It is many years ago," he commenced in the most monotonous voice. "We were after reindeer, and I had strayed a long way from

Digitized by Google

camp. I saw a young reindeer and gave chase. . . ." Here followed a long explanation of all particulars—how he crept; how the unsuspecting animal grazed, jumped a little way, stopped, and turned to walk slowly in a different direction, while he reached a valley, and running noiselessly a long way crept again, and finally killed his prey. The more animated the chase, the more excited grew the relater, quite forgetting that there was no fire in his pipe, and illustrating the proceedings with his hands, the one representing himself and the other his game. "I took up the deer on my back. I had to walk a long way over the hills, and the animal was heavy. I came to a lake and saw two divers. I dropped the deer, loaded my rifle, and went for them." Again his hands went to work, the one this time representing two birds, until one was killed with a bullet through the head. "I loaded again and said to myself, 'What is left behind is lost; I must get the mate also.' It had become shy, and dived; and I had barely time to aim at its head when it dived again, and I lay there watching, with my gun cocked. It came up at last and looked for me, and then it got a bullet through the back and dropped its head flat down. I watched till it drifted on shore. I then picked up the deer, with the birds on top; and when I walked, it felt as if there lay a heavy stone on my shoulder."

We were favoured by beautiful weather for a long time, and mosquitoes became scarcer and scarcer, until they finally disappeared in the latter part of August.

Digitized by Google

Kronprins's Islands form a group in the middle of Disco Strait. They were formerly called Whale Islands, and were important when whales were still plentiful in Baffin's Bay. Ring-bolts in the rocks prove that vessels have touched there. Formerly inhabited, they were afterwards deserted, and remained so for many years. An outpost station had lately been erected, and six families from Dog Island had moved over, with Petersen, the interpreter of Captain Holm's east coast expedition, for an outposter. The catch had not yet proved worth staying for. Petersen is a native Greenlander, of completely European features, and has been educated in Denmark. His experiences with the inhabitants of the east coast were very entertaining. To murder a man in revenge was a legitimate proceeding, and cannibalism was not unfrequent. Old people were harshly treated, and at times buried alive, being asked which they preferred—either to be thrown into the sea, or buried in the usual way. Their mirth-songs and drum-dance were not of such an innocent character as had formerly been supposed, and yet they were by no means bad folk. The inhabitants of Amasalik Land, which was the northernmost place reached, had very little idea of there being any other people in existence; and when they had seen vessels beyond the floe ice, they had believed them to be peopled with spirits. Petersen told them that the earth was round; they answered that it might be the case with the world that he came from, but that their land was flat—*that* they knew, and they believed they knew more about it

Digitized by Google

than he did. Woman was almost considered an inferior being to man, and was at her husband's mercy. Would a man marry a girl, he dragged her by main force to his house, beating her if she was unwilling to follow; yet, did she follow willingly, she would for ever after be called opprobrious names by everybody. Their religion they had very little faith in; and as to their *angakoks* (wise men), no one believed in them, although they were shown some respect.

The English squadron, under Captain Austin, which in 1850 went in search of Franklin, touched at these islands on their way north, and built two cairns, one of which is shaped like an arm pointing north. Captain Ommaney, the discoverer of the place on Beechy Island, in Lancaster Sound, where the crews of *Erebus* and *Terror* had wintered in 1845–46, also touched here on his homeward journey, as is shown by an inscription on the rock, that runs thus—

ASSISTANCE
INTRED ON (disappeared),
1851.

But one of our crew had ever been to Disco, and it was evident that the others had fears of the unknown country before them. Brave where they knew the land—that is to say, when the weather was calm and dry—they began to fret when entering unknown regions. Their spirits rose when the light southerly wind died away in the last part of the strait, which is reputed to be twenty-four

Digitized by Google

miles wide, although in reality it scarcely measures fourteen. The sight of the beautiful cliffs of Disco also tended to raise the spirits of every one.

Godhavn is often called by the Scotch whalers, who frequently touch there, "Lively." Most parts of Greenland bear witness to having at earlier periods been covered by glaciers and worn smooth under their pressure. The granite found here is buried under mountains of trap of a peculiar aspect. The layers are perfectly horizontal, equally broad, of a reddish tint, and some two to three thousand feet high. The site of the colony, a peninsula, and the opposite shore of the bay, which forms a good haven, is of granite, as are also some islands to the north. On the outermost point of the peninsula, on a steep cliff, stands a strange-looking house, which, when closely examined, is found to be formed of the jawbones of whales. It is used as a look-out station for whales in the spring, when they appear off this coast and are sometimes caught, and is a favourite spot with visitors anxious to immortalize themselves. Sides, walls, floor, and benches were all covered with names of Greenlanders, Danes, and British or American whalers, or man-of-war's men.

Early in the forenoon, when standing on the shore, I was long under the impression of being transported to some part of Italy or Spain. The deep blue of the sea, the reddish hue of the mountains, and the dry appearance of the distant greensward, in connection with a fresh warm atmosphere, all combined to call up memories of the south; and

Digitized by Google

the illusion did not vanish until I glanced at my nearest surroundings—the wooden houses of the Danes, the warehouses, and the turf huts of the Greenlanders amidst the dung-heaps. The vegetation was remarkably vigorous for the latitude, and for a place so near the open sea; and I was told that not far from the colony were to be found quanes —the only spot in North Greenland where they

WALRUS HEAD.

grow. It must be remembered that the red hills here present a large surface to attract the rays of the noontide sun, and they are probably able to retain the heat for some time.

I had one day the good fortune to witness a walrus-chase. The animal had come into the bay and was close to the beach. I heard the whole population call out, and finally succeeded in seeing it myself, greatly astonished at the natives being able to follow it with their eyes when it was under

Digitized by Google

water. It was scarcely aware of the dangers surrounding it, nor able to form a plan of retreat, before three kayakers had set out in pursuit of it. One of these, however, fled for dear life when it looked at him and commenced to roar, while the others soon killed it with their harpoons and lances. It is only when these beasts are on shore that the Greenlanders attempt to kill them with firearms, their skulls being too thick for an ordinary bullet.

Digitized by Google

GODHAVN.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE ARCTIC SEA.

CHAPTER IX.

Native opposition to the inspector's authority—I let slip the opportunity of returning home by the steamer—Disco fjord—Interior of Disco-land is unexplored—The natives at church—The ceremony of rubbing noses is abandoned, and that of hand-shaking not quite established—We return to Egedesminde, where a brig is waiting for the arrival of Dr. Nansen—Mr. Meigaard—We pass Green Island and come to Claushavn—A strong current—The cause of the current and its results—Our crew find no place like home—Klokkerhuk—Fine sport with ptarmigan and eider-ducks—In a dense fog we reach Ritenbenk—The Waigat and Tesketok ice-fjords—Krikkertak—A grand dinner in Sarkak—Difficulties caused by ice—The first snow and the September moon—Read Bay—An iceberg gone to pieces.

GODHAVN was the only place I had seen or heard of where anything like a native opposition to the Danes had been expressed, and the feeble attempts at resisting the authority of the Inspector for North Greenland, who lives here, had been led by two half-caste brothers who, contrary to what has been observed in other parts of that country, possessed great authority over their countrymen. As people had been observed to visit the whalers, and some-

Digitized by Google

times to be carried on shore from them the worse for drams, the inspector had forbidden every one to go on board the vessels. They consequently all stayed away the next time one came into port. The captain came as usual on shore to pay a visit to the inspector, who returned the compliment the next day and, maybe, himself tasted the Scotch whisky, but he no sooner set foot on shore than he was surrounded and beaten. After which he spoke to the men and declared that they were in the right, as he himself should not have done what he had forbidden them to do. Later on—another inspector was then in office—an order was issued forbidding all women to go on board any ship whatsoever. A Danish gunboat arrived, and the captain sent an invitation on shore for all women to come on board for a ball. On this the leader of the opposition stepped forward and ordered that no Greenland girl should go. As they were not allowed to visit other vessels, he would show that he was able to put a stop to the ball, and would see who in the end was the most powerful, himself or the inspector. It looked for a while as if he would succeed; but when the Danes had sent their servant-girls, and prevailed upon others to do the same, the rest, wishing so much to dance to the music of a band, soon followed, and the poor man sat on the rock, musing at the sad failure of his rebellion.

I was for some time quite bewildered as to the colour of the women's ribbons round their krilledik (hair-knot), seeing that many different colours were

Digitized by Google

STATION IN DISCO FJORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

used. At length I learned that colour meant nothing in North Greenland. It was well known, I was told, that in the south these indications were worn, but here they were not such fools as to imitate a foreign fashion.

When I arrived at Godhavn the *Hvidbjornen* had left the previous day, and my only chance of returning by her would be to go to Egedesminde, where she was due in a week. There would probably be no more vessels this year, and, after considering, I decided on wintering rather than returning now, when the real good time for painting—no mosquitoes—was at hand, and the country was still so lovely. Also the winter might have its beauty and other attractions, and consequently I let slip what then appeared to be the only opportunity of getting away from Greenland till the next year. Though I did my best to persuade myself that my resolution was wise, yet I will not deny that the sensation was an uncommon one when I went on board and we were off again for Disco fjord. Although a year passes rapidly, it is, under some circumstances, a long time to look forward to and in some cases to lose.

It was charming weather on the 4th of August, when we steered into the open sea past the rocks that rose steeply from the water, and where landing was impossible. Burgomasters and mallemokes had their nests there, and a heavy surf beat on the shore. I had been told of the skeleton of a whale some thousand feet up in a mountain, but did not see it. Perhaps it is a story of some other fish which had grown larger by time. Rounding a headland, we

Digitized by Google

ran into the Disco fjord, where I saw the loveliest prospect I had seen this year. The sun's rays chased each other over hills and dales, driving the deep violet shadows before them, causing the ice on the mountain's brow to shine with double brightness. Add to this the pasture by the water's edge, with innumerable flocks of birds, with lights—dashed firmly in, I would have said, had it been a picture—and you had a landscape unrivalled in charm.

The island, which at a distance looks flat and ice-covered, is, as we draw near, seen to be intersected by deep ravines and broad valleys. Its area is nearly two thousand square miles. The interior has, as yet, not been explored to any extent, but Stenstrup and others have made extensive examinations of the coal deposits, with their numerous petrifactions, and the chalk cliffs on the coast. With the exception of a broad valley, much used in winter in going from Godhavn to the fjord, the interior is a perfect *terra incognita*, whither the natives have a dread of going, as they believe it to be peopled by a supernatural dwarf people. There is an account of a Dane who, a long time ago, set off alone on an exploring expedition among the hills and perished there.

Reindeer antlers are to be found, but the animals are supposed to have disappeared. According to what I was told by people there, they had found fresh footprints this year. Some one also told us of a liquid substance, having an extraordinary smell, coming out of the earth in one place. The discovery had been mentioned to the administrator, who asked the man to fetch him a bottleful of it, but he was so

Digitized by Google

unfortunate as to break it, and the administrator had only been able to ascertain that apparently it was not petroleum, but nevertheless a very remarkable fluid. An earthquake had last winter shaken the outpost station and caused great alarm. Some of the inhabitants had even made preparations to move away, but when the first fright had subsided they thought better of it, and resolved on staying.

The entire population had left the place when we came. The outposter, too, had locked his shop and started; but, meeting us, he returned, and, a kayaker following, the latter was hastily despatched to the salmon river at the end of the fjord, where the greater part of the inhabitants were, and they came next day in their very finest attire. To what extent these people were true Christians I am unable to state, but I am inclined to believe that a large majority really were pious, and I am convinced that they all were happy at the disappearance of the ancient state of affairs. Wherever the missionary appeared and went to preach in the church, if there was one, or an empty house, or a tent, they seemed eager to listen, and they all partook of the Lord's Supper, coming afterwards one by one to shake me by the hand. The catechists are empowered to baptise, but Greenlanders insist on this rite being confirmed by the clergyman at his next visit. Only the clergyman can perform the marriage ceremony, and there generally were several couples to be married wherever Rasmussen came, and I was amused at the droll scenes that sometimes occurred owing to the extreme bashfulness of the young

Digitized by Google

people. The lovers were invariably the last you would suspect of caring for each other, both trying to look as unconcerned as possible, he coming with his hand in his pockets from one side, and she from the other, and immediately after being united, though they really have the greatest respect for the ceremony, they drifted away in different directions without exchanging a look or a word. Everybody who has travelled in Greenland has heard of those marriage stories wherein the bridegroom declares that he does not know her, never asked her, and does not care whether he marries her or not, but, if the parson wishes it, he is willing. At a colony with a large population, where some hundred people had partaken of the Lord's Supper, it was somewhat troublesome to shake hands, which was done first with all the Danes and afterwards with the natives themselves. The origin of this custom I could not ascertain. Hand-shaking is not at all customary, nor indeed is saluting in any way, as the ancient ceremony of rubbing noses has disappeared. The Eskimo is the only nation I have heard of, among whom it is not the custom, on meeting a stranger, to say "Good day," or a word of some kind to show he comes in peace and is a friend. When two kayakers meet, they stop and stare at each other for some minutes without saying a word; and when likewise a man enters a house, whether he is an acquaintance or not, he will go and sit down and stare from one to another. When meeting Europeans, Greenlanders usually say, "*God dag*," and also "*Farvel*" on parting.

Digitized by Google

JAKOBSHAVN.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

On our return to Godhavn we were detained by rain until the 13th of August. After having encamped one night on one of the Kronprins's Islands, and the next on Dog Island, we arrived at Egedesminde. Again my hope of returning to Denmark revived when I found the brig *Peru* in the bay, and learned that she was ordered to remain until the 20th of September, to take Nansen's expedition home, if it should arrive before that date.

The prospects of success for Nansen were naturally a favourite theme of conversation everywhere, and opinions differed. An authority on inland ice, Mr. Meigaard, who a few years ago undertook a journey, together with Mr. Peary, in early spring, and reached a height of some seven thousand feet, thought it very likely that he would succeed if ever he got to the shore; but he had no experience in the current of floe ice, called the *stor is*, or main ice, which blocks the entire east coast until September. He considered the best season for an ice expedition to be the month of April, when the snow was still hard and the clefts spanned by bridges of frozen snow, and when you had plenty of daylight.

I was advised not to quit Egedesminde, as Nansen might put in an appearance any day; but, preferring to remain throughout the winter rather than lose the chance of seeing other parts of the gulf, I again embarked. We this time passed Green Islands, a group of low trap islands in the centre of the gulf. On reaching Claushavn the water far and wide had an extraordinary clayish look, and we perceived a strong clayish current issuing from the fjord. We

Digitized by Google

were told that the current for the last week had been almost too much for kayakers to tow seals ashore, and we were warned to be careful, of which caution, however, there was no special necessity, as the sea was again getting into its everyday condition. Arriving at Jakobshavn, we obtained an explanation of the phenomenon. A large fresh-water lake amidst the inland ice, well known to the Greenlanders for years, had burst its borders and emptied itself into the fjord. Water had everywhere become so fresh that seals and halibut had fled; many of the latter, bewildered, had run up close to the beach, where they had been hauled on shore with boat-hooks.

The species of halibut caught at Jakobshavn is much smaller than the ordinary one. It is extremely fat, and has long pointed teeth. It is here angled for in depths of two hundred fathoms. Another fish especially caught in winter is the red fish (*Sebastes Norvegicus*), which lives in depths of from one hundred and twenty to two hundred fathoms, and is so full of oil that it sometimes is boiled and used instead of blubber. Sharks also form an important part of the fishery here, and are in summer hooked from kayaks as well as from boats. Sharks twelve to fourteen feet long are not uncommon, and, being both strong and voracious, it is strange to see a boy haul them to the surface with an ordinary fishing-line, and kill them with a knife. No instances have come to my knowledge of sharks having attacked kayaks. In winter they are angled for from holes in the ice. Sometimes they are attracted by a lighted torch and simply

Digitized by Google

RITENBENK.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

hauled on to the ice by a boat-hook, and their flesh is then often made use of, while in summer the liver, containing much oil, is the only part taken.

The *Hvidbjornen* had been to Jakobshavn and gone again. A French traveller had followed, and barely had time to cross the eight miles overland, to have a look at the inland ice, when she was off once more. Steam, hurry, and globe-trotters had finally reached even Greenland.

The weather continued warm, and one was now absolutely free from mosquitoes at all times. After a brief stay at Jakobshavn, we started again for the north, this time accompanied by Mrs. Rasmussen and the rest of the family. On the first day out we landed at Klokkerhuk, on the Arveprins's Island. Where the soil on the coast had gradually been undermined by the sea, it presented a wall some ten feet high, consisting of gravel, seal-bones, ashes, and various remains, intermixed with tools and other relics from ancient times. The population had once upon a time been on the verge of starvation, and now the place is uninhabited. The only buildings that remain are a solid log cabin and a storehouse, of which the former is frequently made use of by the passers-by, as is shown by the numerous names covering walls, ceiling, and doors.

We had to content ourselves with the place during two days' headwinds. Some fine subjects kept me occupied during most of that time, while a flock of ptarmigan took up the rest. Ptarmigan were plentiful in this neighbourhood, and I found traces of hares—the first I had met with in North

Digitized by Google

Greenland, where they are rare. It was the season for the young gulls, who, full of curiosity, came to look at us and constantly supplied our crew with fresh flesh. When we left it was calm, and we had good sport with flocks of eider-ducks, who, having shed their wing feathers, were unable to fly. It was impossible to calculate where you would see a head come out of water, to disappear again in a few seconds, the entire bird seldom showing itself; and many times had it already gone down when the shot struck the surface. In the most extraordinary places, sometimes close enough to the boat to be struck with an oar, would they come up, so many at a time as to quite bewilder us. The Greenlanders have a way of rowing round a flock with several boats, and slowly driving the birds before them, till they finally close them in so that no other escape than running inshore is possible, and they are easily taken with the hands. A fog came down from the hills and completely concealed our surroundings from view, and, after making some mistakes, we finally succeeded in finding the harbour of Ritenbenk.

When next day broke with glorious weather, it showed us a colony of a more than usual comfortable and well-kept appearance. If it had not been for the Kangek mountain, facing the harbour, that reminds one of some Norwegian scenery from the Lofot Islands, I might have fancied myself in some Swedish fishing village. Many people had a thoroughly Scandinavian look, being fair and tall. To the women the Eskimo dress was peculiarly unbe-

Digitized by Google

KRIKKERTAK ICE FJORD.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

coming, and it seemed to me unnatural that a population of predominant Danish extraction, and under Danish rule, should not understand a word outside the Eskimo tongue, which at best is but little better than the language of Indians, negroes, or South Sea Islanders.

Going north from here, we came out into the gulf, where we in the evening had a fine view of the sun setting between mountains on the Waigat. The whole way to the Tesketoks ice-fjord was picturesque, and that fjord itself not least so, though of a different character.

It was bordered by mountain ridges, steep and snowless, which looked very dark against the drifting ice proceeding from the very inland ice that was visible here in all its solemnity for a long stretch. The fjord is not nearly so closely packed as at Jakobshavn, and permits of kayaks and even large boats penetrating to the interior.

It was late before we reached Krikkertak, situated some four miles up the fjord, and we noticed that new ice rapidly formed around us as soon as the sun went down. Also on shore the little water-pools were frozen at mornings—a symptom of coming winter. The days remained warm and fair, with the exception of the 28th and 29th of August, on which dates snowstorms covered with white all the mountains and hills from the top down to some six hundred feet above the sea level. Krikkertak is an island in a bay of the ice-fjord. From the outposter's house one could see the mainland on three sides, with excellent reindeer grounds, and some-

Digitized by Google

times could perceive the animals themselves grazing in the valleys. The place is also a good one for sealing in, both summer and winter; but the winter catch was likely to be small this year, as all the dogs except two had died. It was said that the last epidemic commenced at Umanak, with which settlement there is much intercourse during the winter, and the sleigh-road from the gulf leads from here overland for thirty miles, and follows for some distance the edge of a mountain three thousand feet above the level of the sea.

The island lies under the seventieth degree north latitude, and was the northernmost place I reached. It was asserted that the fjord was peculiarly poor in ice this year, and that the icebergs produced here were more brittle than those in Jakobshavn's fjord.

When the inhabitants had been to communion; when a sermon had been preached, some children been baptized, a pair been married, and circumstances permitted, we left the place and rowed for Sarkak, situated sixteen miles up the Waigat. From there the opposite Disco-land is mystically fascinating in appearance. On the continental side, also, the view is most picturesque, the mountains having bold outlines with glaciers shooting down between red and black masses of rock. Not far off there are coal mines with numerous petrifications of large trees of bygone times. When they were in their prime, Greenland had a temperature somewhat corresponding with the present one of Madeira. In my ignorance I took the black strata in the mountains to be

Digitized by Google

STATION OF KRIKKERLAK.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

coal, but was informed that coal was constantly found in white strata, among chalk and clay.

Many of the icebergs from Toskelek strand here, to which circumstance the Sarkakians probably owe their abundance of seals. In August, an average of upwards of forty seals a day had been caught by a population not amounting to one hundred, all told, and still I saw cases of the greatest poverty. The inmates of one hut were quite naked, and thus prevented, even in this season, from going out of doors, and all we could see of them were some unwashed and uncombed heads.

The outposter was a strong, heavy-bearded Greenlander, evidently quite up to the civilized mark. His was the only Greenlander's house in which I saw a black silk parasol, but I was unable to discover whether it had served for any other purpose than as an object of curiosity. The house was a comfortable, spacious wooden building, constructed by Lange himself, and neatly kept. A room, with a regular bed in it, was reserved for European visitors. We had to take supper, and to test our hostess's capacity as a housewife. Mrs. Lange put before us, on a shining white tablecloth, none but imported dishes, comprising a salt leg of mutton, salt beef, and polonies that had been kept for ages, butter, soft bread (of her own baking and really good), and cheese, all which were considered much more stylish, and really were more costly than dishes of native produce. I could not help thinking of all the seals I had seen that day, and of our own eider-ducks, when I tried to eat the antique leg of salt mutton, and would

Digitized by Google

gladly have exchanged everything, except the bread, for a single fresh seal chop. Like the Icelanders and some nations in Northern Siberia, the original Greenlanders use no salt, which seems strange to us, who are apt to consider it necessary with almost everything.

We had to return to Krikkertak, where Mrs. Rasmussen and the children had been left with her brother, who was the outposter there. Some large icebergs had broken up in the fjord, and the small pieces, covering miles, had frozen together in solid fields, making it difficult for us to enter. We finally came in and out again the next day, on which we reached Ritenbenk, enjoying the scenery, which looked so different from what it did when we saw it last. The country was all dressed in white, with blue shadows and reddish lights from a low sun, which made the scene doubly picturesque. Though September had begun, the nights were lighter than our midsummer nights, and the moon rose with such a magic light that we admitted that never at home had we seen it so beautiful. When strolling around on the rocks, I was accompanied by an old Icelandic boatswain, and was much amused at his outbursts of enthusiasm over the country where he had spent the best part of his life. "Can any spot be fairer than this?" he exclaimed. "See the green grass on the hills; look at yonder land, at the Waigat or the Kangek on that side, and see the deep still waters everywhere."

On the 4th of September we went southward, but had barely reached Klokkerhuk when storm and

Digitized by Google

snow set in and detained us four days. During that captivity I sent towards Nansen and his crew many a thought. Had they arrived or not was the great question that would not be solved until I came much further south. According to Greenlander fashion, we were not rowed as the crow flies, although it was a calm, but followed the coast, going about four miles out of our course. We touched at the outpost of Red Bay, a strikingly situated and good sealing-place. Also here we lunched with Greenlanders, and the outposter's wife made many apologies for not possessing any European provisions. Our hostess placed before us a dish of steaming hot boiled seal-flesh, which by that time I had come to consider the best of all kinds of animal food, and one never to be tired of.

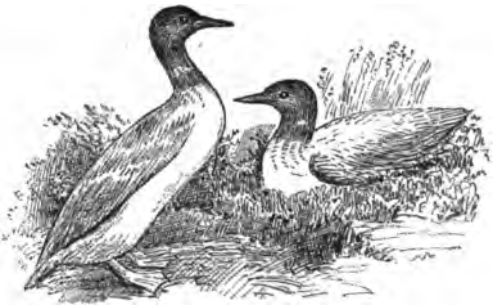
We found so much small ice that we could make but little progress. Two men had as much as they could do to clear the ice sufficiently to allow us to pass. We were told that it originated in a large iceberg having broken up the day before at Jakobshavn, endangering the lives of many persons. We had eight miles to go to reach that place, and all that day we were constantly encumbered by the ice. The remaining part of the iceberg was quite a mountain in itself. All at Jakobshavn spoke of the occurrence, and told how the large berg had commenced to "calve" from one side to the other, throwing off masses gone a long way under water before they came to the surface again. Twelve kayakers out fishing had to abandon their lines and seek the harbour, while the crew of a

Digitized by Google

boat that had been surprised by the heavy swell caused by the falling of ice and by the up-shooting pieces, had been compelled to seek the open gulf and row for several hours before they were able to land. On shore the boat had already been considered lost, and the crew themselves had had no expectation of saving their lives. From time immemorial nothing so extraordinary had happened, and never had been here witnessed a surf like the one that day breaking on the rocks.

EIDER-DUCK.

Digitized by Google



NORTHERN DIVERS.

CHAPTER X.

Wonderful story of mirage and of a large animal—Akugdlet, whence explorers were sent in search of Nansen—Already very cold on the inland ice—I pass the islands again and find most birds gone—A sledge ride at Egedesminde—Remarks on the Eskimo dogs—Tales from the extreme north—Hostile demonstration in Upernivik—A benevolent Greenlander—Bear-hunting in winter—A woman supposed to have been devoured by bears—Footprints of unknown animals—A *savset*—Seals come up to bask in the sun in the month of May.

I WAS here told of a singular story coming from Ikerasak, in the district of Umanak. In one of the ice-fjords up there a bluish-grey fog had often been observed, in which a mirage of a fjord, with open water and floating icebergs, had occasionally been seen. The outlines of the land might look weak or decided, they were always the same; but the icebergs were observed to change places from day to day, and even from hour to hour. Also, at the seasons when the waters were covered by ice, the picture had open water and waves. It was

Digitized by Google

supposed to be the mirage of some of the deep fjords on the east coast, and people have really taken much trouble to learn something about this phenomena, but as yet without a result.

Still more incomprehensible was a story of a large animal which had visited the waters at Jakobshavn a week ago. It was white, and had a snout some two feet long. Some believed that they could detect ears. It would dive like a seal, but remained sometimes on the surface for an hour together, and would growl like a dog at kayaks in the distance. When last seen, it came up with a large blue-sides in its mouth. All the kayakers fled to the shore, and from a promontory watched the animal with a spy-glass. From Claushavn it had likewise been observed the day after, and at both places the minds of the Greenlanders were occupied with it.

When I afterwards brought the conversation to bear on this animal, I heard from a Danish outposter from the Upernivik district—a man whose word I consider perfectly reliable—that in the extreme north that same creature was known by sight. The Greenlanders there told of ears, snout, growling noise, and the half-hour's rest on the surface of the water, and called it a meledok, which means white with spots. It appeared but seldom, and then always in the white whale season, in the latter part of the summer, and it had never been found dead or seen close by, being extremely shy. For eight years my informer had been outposter at Apelarlok, and during that time the meledok had been observed but twice. It was supposed to be able to move

Digitized by Google

rapidly on dry land, and a Greenlander had related how he once saw it asleep on the ice, when he approached and made his rifle ready, but before he came within reach it got up and ran away. Whatever this wonderful animal may be, no one who has any knowledge of Greenlanders will suspect them of inventing stories, and, having experienced the great precision with which their well-developed sight at long distances is able to distinguish the various animals, I cannot believe them capable of mistaking one for another. However, it is likely enough that their native fear of the unknown and their imagination have led them into exaggeration. It is quite incredible that in our time a large mammalia should be allowed to escape having been annexed and registered by science; but it may nevertheless be worth while to keep an eye on this meledok.

One man I met made light of the story, and said that one could not give the slightest faith to what the Greenlanders told about strange things. They were always, he declared, seeing wonderful animals. A second man had heard of this same white animal, although he had never seen it himself. It had kept Godhavn blockaded for more than a week, when not a kayak, nor even a boat, dared to go out. He wanted the mail sent to Egedesminde, but could persuade no one to take it, and when he had asked what the brute was like, the only answer was that it resembled a piece of foam when it came up. Another time a boat came in, the crew of which had been terribly scared by the sudden appearance of a large head, with many

Digitized by Google

pointed teeth, close to the boat. Once he remembered there had been a great uproar caused by a strange animal which had been caught, and when he came to see it he found it to be a species of the *Lagenorhynchus albirostris* whale, which is very rare in Greenland.

Once, in 1884, when a kayak-man had been sent on an errand, that he returned after two days and reported, besides other matters, that he had been scared by a monster, on which the following conversation ensued:—

"What animal was it?"

"The good-for-nothing."

"How large was it?"

"As large as a land."

"Was it a whale?"

"Do you believe I can't tell a whale?"

We two Danes smiled sceptically at one another, while the Greenlanders put on their most serious faces. On the home journey this incident was mentioned, when a returning Dane explained that the animal evidently had been one of the large species of cuttle-fish, which at intervals appear in Davis's Straits, and are much feared on account of their speed and long arms, with which they catch their prey. Any animal not made use of by Greenlanders, from the smallest to the very largest, they often call by the common name, "The good-for-nothing."

On the 11th of September I left Jakobshavn for the last time. Again touching at Claushavn and Christianshaab, we came to the outpost station, Akug-

Digitized by Google

dlet, in the inner part of the south-east bay. From there expeditions were sent in search of Nansen. Since the 22nd of June there had been ten expeditions, each exploring four places — Orpigsiut, Kangersunek, Akugdlinguak, and Tersiursak, two men for each place. At all these places, except Akugdlinguak, there had been erected cairns, with fresh provisions and communications. The hundred miles' front of the ice had each time been explored, and each excursion had lasted three days, from which it is evident that the able kayakers of Akugdlet had not been able to attend to much else that summer. The trade had offered twenty krones reward for those who first discovered Nansen, besides which the outposter, Mr. Olsen, had offered two hundred. His firm confidence in the success of Nansen had lately been somewhat shaken by the season being so far advanced without any intelligence of him having been received.

It was his opinion that it was already very cold on the ice, and the Greenlanders told of hard frost in its vicinity. On the 16th the last official expedition was to start, and as soon as the result was known the vessel was to be permitted to leave. Mr. Olsen would continue to send men in search every two weeks as long as there was any possibility of Nansen's arrival, and if he did arrive, he and his men would be lodged at the various surrounding colonies.

In all places near reindeer districts that I had visited this summer, from Holstenborg and north to Krikkertak, I had been told of there being an extra

Digitized by Google

number of deer this year. At Claushavn especially, so many had been killed that it had not always been possible to transport them home at once. Also at Akugdlet a large number had fallen; but, on the other hand, there were complaints there, as at Christianshaab and Ikamiut, of the sword-fish having scared the seals away.

For the second time I called at Ikamiut, and for the fourth time I passed Denmark Island. A month had not elapsed since I had been in the straits and other waters of the south-east bay, yet the bird life had changed entirely. Of the formerly so numerous kittiwakes, but a few had remained, and an occasional gull. Razor-billed auks and puffins had left altogether, and in their stead were thousands of swimming eider-ducks, incapable of flying from having shed their wing feathers. Young burgomasters flew, full of curiosity, low over the boat, and flocks of geese migrating southward were seen. In another month all would have left these seas; but then the ptarmigan would return from their breeding-places to their haunts on the coast.

I reached Egedesminde on the 14th, and found the brig quietly moored, and my pleasant excursions in the Polar seas were at an end.

As a last novelty I was treated to a sleigh-drive when the earth had been covered by snow. The administrator prided himself on having the finest team in Greenland, and, indeed, they were a spirited lot to behold as they tore away over the ground with their tails curved over their backs. Neither rocks nor holes, no obstacle, indeed, under a steep wall,

Digitized by Google

EGEDESMINDE.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

would have checked them. Two young ones, Ajax the First and Second, had never been harnessed before, and looked peculiarly stupid on finding themselves captured. When the team started, all for one and one for all, the two recruits at first tried to make their escape, but in the effort they rolled over and over, bumping from rock to rock as they were dragged along, until they finally took their places in the pack and learnt that their most sensible course was to work with their companions. The amount of knocking about which a sleigh can endure without being smashed is incredible. The low runners, some six feet long, are lashed with sealskin thongs to the cross-pieces that form the seat, and afford elasticity. The two upright poles give a hold to the driver if he has to follow on foot and steer the sleigh from behind. The dogs are partly guided by the whip and partly by the voice, but in many instances the dogs know better how to find their way than does their driver. On smooth ice fifteen miles may be done in an hour, but on rugged ground a pace of four or five miles is called good, and five hundred pounds is considered a load for eight dogs. The Rev. Mr. Rasmussen, who had performed many perilous and adventurous winter journeys, described the conditions under which the dogs travel as being most severe at times. When currents had cut through the ice, putting large tracts under water, and this again had frozen on the surface, the dogs would cut their legs and be covered with ice and bleeding. Weak dogs would sometimes drop down dead, and even the best ones might give

Digitized by Google

out. Where the ice was broken, as often was the case near land, or in crossing large fissures, great skill was required to get dogs and sleigh across, and it had often seemed to him a miracle that he came safe over. When uncertain where to go and you had to leave it to the dogs to find the way, you might be always sure that their instinct would keep them from running into real peril. In case of dangers ahead the "boss" dog would stop and growl, sniff, and turn in some other direction.

It was impossible to drive a team without having a "boss," as the dog is called that has absolute control over all the others. He leads the way, encourages, punishes offences, settles disputes, and has to be used with the greatest care. He will see, unmoved, the whip used on other dogs, especially if they deserve it, but an unjust stroke to himself generally spoils him entirely. A team of dogs generally have terrible fights among themselves until the strongest has beaten all the others, from which time his sway is undisputable until another dog grows up and, having vanquished him, reduces him to the rank of a commoner, when he becomes as loyal a subject as he formerly was a severe master.

There was great excitement when the ground was steep. Sometimes the driver would fasten all the dogs behind, perhaps tie up one of the feet of each animal, and himself take hold of one of the poles and act as a break. At other times he would let the sleigh go backwards in front of the dogs. Again, he would take his seat and let the sleigh hurry down, with the dogs following as best they might,

Digitized by Google

some getting entangled and being dragged behind, and finally all landing in the deep snow below. If there was any possibility of reaching a human dwelling, they generally made for it, but otherwise they would encamp on the ice. The bearskin sleeping bags would be spread, and the travellers would creep into them, with as many dogs as possible on the top.

It was strange to behold the respect of Greenlanders' dogs for the "boss" of the merchants. He was in nearly all the places I visited "the monarch of all he surveyed," either from being the best fed, or from the moral courage derived from knowing himself to belong to the head man. If he possessed his proper amount of self-respect he would permit no fighting, and, if such occurred, be at the scene of encounter in an instant, and punish the pair of combatants. He was also the favoured lover of all the she-dogs of the place, and, in case of any other dog making love to members of his harem, a severe chastisement was the result. Also, when being fed, if another dog was disrespectful enough to take a better bite than himself, he promptly avenged the liberty. I noticed a queer incident in Christianshaab, where a large European dog landed. In an instant all the Eskimo wolf-like dogs of the place were upon him, but he vigorously hurled them about in every direction, and, taking no more notice of them than if they had been so many dead cats, walked quietly away. No dog ever touched him after that. The he-dogs would erect the bristles on their back and show their teeth from a distance, while the shes,

Digitized by Google

after looking at him for a couple of days, would begin to make friends, and the whelps would come forth, wherever he passed, to play with him. Evidently he had become the master of the dog population, but lacked both desire and ambition to interfere with a set so far beneath himself.

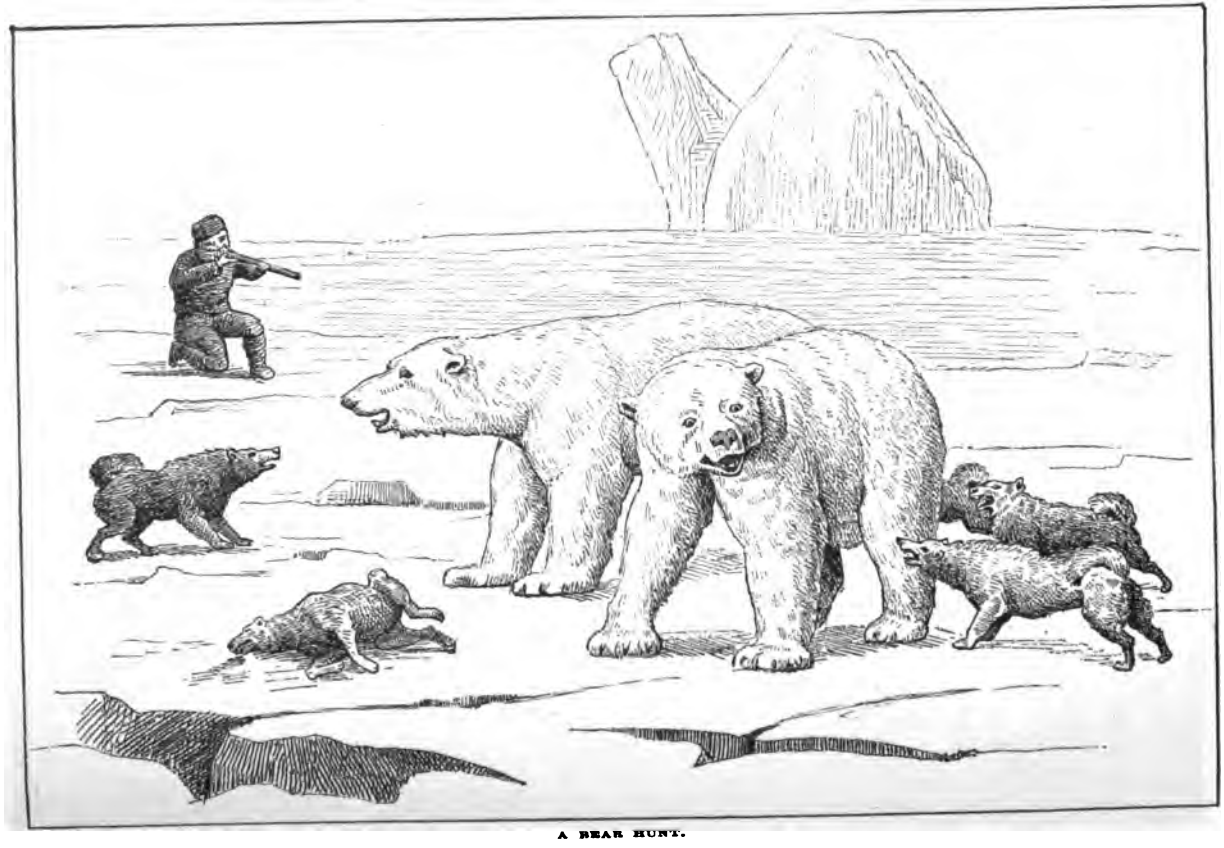
A man from the Upernivik district was returning to Copenhagen on a visit after a stay of fourteen years. According to his statement, people were far more civilized at Disco Bay than in the far north. They were all baptised now; but not many years ago there had been persons who had lived in the real heathenish times, and made no secret of having fed on human liver, and one could still detect a sentiment of regret that those times were over. No Greenlander would ever think of expressing such feelings to a Dane, but he had it from his native wife, in whom he confided, that such was the case. The songs of those days, and their peculiar festivals in dark rooms, were sometimes practised in secret.

When the first native missionary, a man who had studied and been ordained in Denmark, arrived, all the population assembled to receive him. On nearing the shore he perceived a woman dancing, singing, and cutting the most extraordinary capers. On his asking her what she meant, she replied, "We thought that you were one of our own people, and would permit us to return to our old ways. When we sang, played, and danced formerly, it was much better than all the new customs we have now."

Some sixty years ago, the colony of Upernivik was attacked by the natives and defended by the

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



A BEAR HUNT.

Digitized by Google

resolute action of a single man. The natives had collected, and came determined to pick a quarrel. One man, entering the shop, threw a wet sealskin on to the counter, demanding money for it, though he knew that none but dry skins were bought. The merchant, who was alone, saw the crowd of armed men outside, threw back the hide in the face of the Greenlander, and, pushing him out of the door, picked up a rifle and told the assemblage he knew well what they had come for, but they had better go home at once. Any man showing signs of hostility, he said, he would shoot, adding that all the rifles in his store were ready loaded. There never was any trouble after that. A half-caste son of that merchant is still alive, and is praised as the best hunter and the most benevolent of all Greenlanders. Though an elderly man, he never let pass an opportunity of hunting. Be it ever so cold, he and his sons would be off for the ice. Often, when others remained at home for fear of being overcome with frost, this man came back with his sleigh laden with flesh, and he never forgot anybody when he had plenty. He did not even wait for the poor to come, but he drove to their houses, distributing fresh flesh amongst all.

The winter sets in early in the extreme north. No sooner are the waters well covered with ice than bears make their appearance, and continue roaming about the whole winter. A bear can travel a long distance in a single night, and it is not always an easy matter to track it. When a hunter finds a track, he puts his dogs on it, and, on coming in sight of the game, he unhitches them from the sleigh.

Digitized by Google

The dogs soon overtake and attack the bear, biting its heels and making it sit down to defend itself, when the man comes up and shoots it. Sometimes it climbs an iceberg, being able to ascend an almost perpendicular side. The dogs, on this, surround the berg, and it is not always an easy matter to kill the bear, or, when dead, to fetch it down again. Often, indeed, the dogs are killed themselves.

Only one case had occurred in this man's experiences of a person being supposed to have been slain by bears. I tell the story in the man's own words.

"There was a poor woman living at A——, who, when winter came, was destitute of everything. She lived on somehow till the dark and hungry time arrived. One very cold evening, some one came and knocked at my door, and my wife, going to open it, found her standing there. 'Come in,' she said, 'you look frozen, and warm yourself by the stove.' The poor girl shivered, was very weak, and spoke so strangely that my wife thought she had lost her wits. Finally she told her errand, which was that she had come to ask for some ryemeal and blubber from the store, as she had not had a morsel to eat for a long time. She received her portion of poor aid for a week, and, being very thinly clad, my wife insisted that she should stay over the night; and she gave her a hot meal and a cup of coffee. Stay, however, she would not by any means, although she had no fire in her own house, and lived a long way off. Next day some one came and asked me if I had

Digitized by Google

seen her, for she had not returned to her house. A man had met her the previous night when she came from my place. She then went in a different direction to that in which her house lay, and stopped to look around. He asked her where she was going, and she said she wanted to go home, but was afraid of meeting a bear; and he got the idea that her mind was wandering, there being as much chance the way she went towards the mountains of meeting bears as if she had gone the direct road. He told her so, and she promised to go home at once, saying that she had been so well treated by my wife. But she had not appeared. We had a flat roof on the outposter's house, with barrels of frozen meat standing there. It was late on the following night when my wife heard steps on the roof. She listened, and said she could distinguish the step of the poor woman. 'Where can she have been? Her boots are frozen. I am sure she is stealing some bits of meat. Let her; she will not take much.' I did not go out to stop her, but thought it foolish of her not to come in when she knew my wife would take care of her. Next morning I could see the marks of boots in the snow, and found that some pieces of meat had gone; but the girl was never heard of after that, and very soon people began to say that she had *krevtuked* (gone into the country), while others thought she had been devoured by bears. There had been many about, for we saw their tracks. I was driving some time after, and came by a promontory, where the dogs stopped and began to growl—not the way they do on smelling

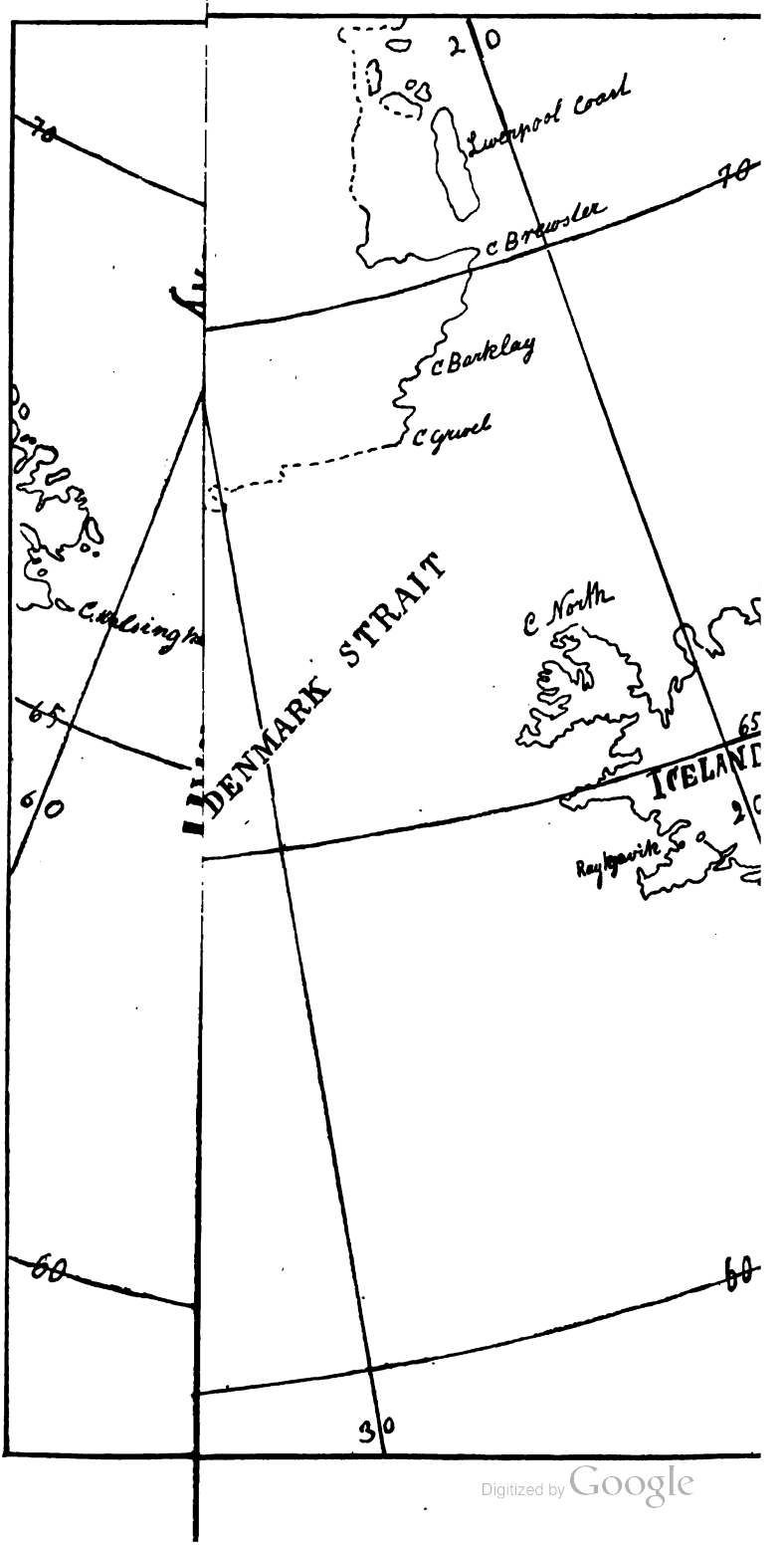
Digitized by Google

game, but when they are frightened by something extraordinary. They had a dislike to passing the place for a long time afterwards, and the Greenlanders perceived the same, and kept their own superstitious ideas about it; but I believe that she had gone mad and stayed out in a hole in the snow, or wandered about to warm herself, and had been killed and eaten by a bear, and that the dogs could smell human blood."

There was a bay near that man's dwelling, where, according to the Greenlanders, people had sometimes been frightened by seeing footprints of some unknown animal. Wolves were frequent thereabout, but the print of their feet was easily recognizable. They would come near the very houses on the ice where people were shark-fishing in the winter and left the carcases about. Bears were often very hungry at that season, and were known to have crushed kayaks for the sake of eating the skin; and one had been killed that had splinters of wood and flannel rags in its stomach. But there were no marks of bears' feet.

One of the great events of winter is when a *savsat* has been discovered. It means an opening in the ice, where animals are confined. When it happens that calm, and severe frost set in simultaneously, and the sea for a large extent is suddenly frozen over, numbers of white whales and narwhals are often frozen in, and resort to the nearest spot where ice has not been formed strong enough to withstand their united efforts. When the hole has once been formed it is rapidly enlarged, and kept open by

Digitized by Google

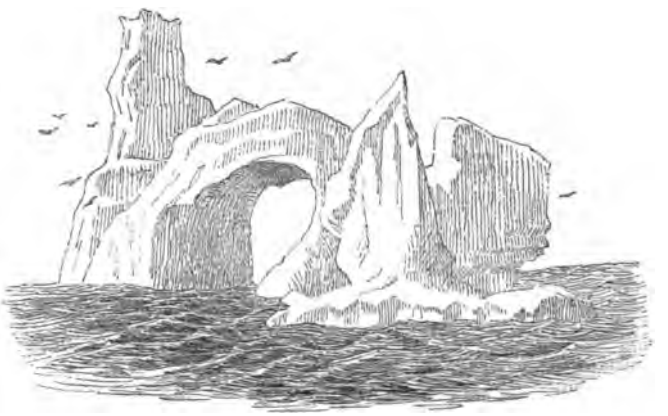


Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

the throng of animals that congregate there. Consequently, when the savsat is discovered, the inhabitants from all the neighbouring places assemble, and the slaughtering commences, and is often continued for several days, giving as many as a hundred animals a day.

Another sort of seal-chase is after *ulok*, which means a seal that has crept on to the ice—a very



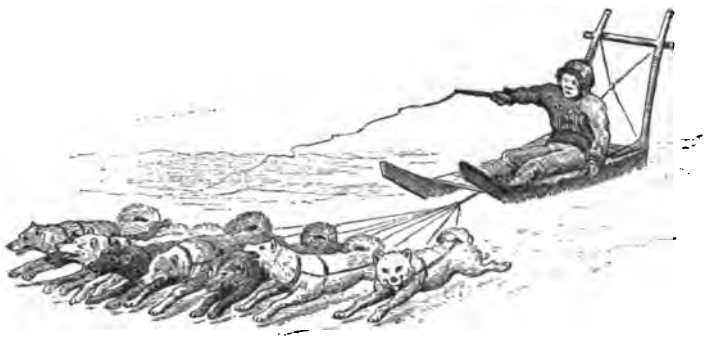
FLOATING ICEBERG.

frequent circumstance in the spring, when warm weather begins to set in—to bask in the sun. Some declare that the seal forms the hole by breathing on the ice. When the opening is large enough it creeps in, and on fine days in the month of May seals may be seen everywhere, asleep or scratching themselves and rolling about, enjoying the warm sun after the long and dreary winter, where they have had nothing but their breathing-hole under the ice. Men go with sledges, and make the dogs

Digitized by Google

stop behind while the hunter cautiously creeps near behind his shooting sail—a screen of white cotton cloth on a pair of runners—and, when close enough, takes aim, gives a yell, on which the seal lifts up its head, when he fires. A hunter can get ten seals a day, and often more, in that way.

Digitized by Google



THE SLEDGE.

CHAPTER XI.

My impressions of Greenland and its people—Their life and industries—Musically gifted—Danish endeavours to cultivate the natives on an Eskimo basis—An express from Akugdlet announces that Nansen has not arrived—I embark and go to sea—"A life on the ocean wave"—We knock about for three weeks in Davis Strait; in two weeks we reach the North Sea, and undergo three weeks' buffeting by the waves—Drop anchor in the roads of Copenhagen.

As far as I have roamed in Greenland by this time, admiration for its lovely day, for its solemn landscapes, with the free hills and dales, has always been the sentiment that possessed me. It must be admitted that, apart from its peculiar beauties, the land is rich enough to maintain its inhabitants; and I am inclined to believe that a still larger population might live and be happy there.

My recollections of the Greenlanders are a mixture of the merry and the sad. I noticed them in the spring, when the sores in their cheeks from frost-

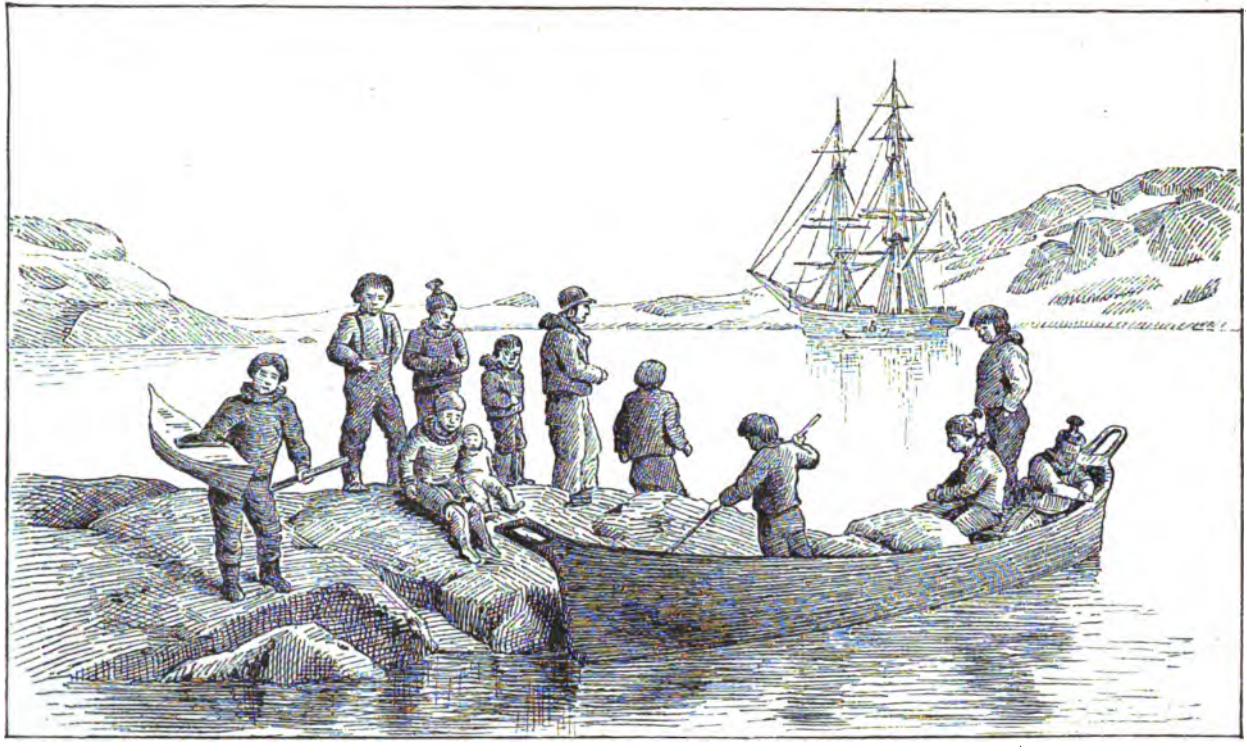
Digitized by Google

bite were healed. The mild weather was melting the snow, and, mounting the roofs of their huts, they would be quietly, for days together, resting and breathing the invigorating air, with the sun shining on them. Often the ceiling breaks down beneath them and is burnt, but the question of replacing it for the next winter does not find room in their happy, careless minds.

The greatest event of spring is the loading of the boats. There is bustle, running to and fro for things which have been forgotten, and the departure is long deferred, for separation coffee must be drunk with parting friends. The females go on board with the patriarchal steerer, and the light skin-boat shoots out of the bay, followed by the men in kayaks. It is a pleasure then to see the girls, so fresh and happy, throwing themselves back oar in hand. It is like a dance, for now they are in their right element. The existence that then begins is the Greenlander's real life, when harpoon, kayak, and rifle are all that is required; when the very tent can be dispensed with, and there is game enough, if not in one place, then in another. Cares are forgotten, and health, courage, and enjoyment of life reign supreme.

You admire the Greenlander's power of resisting cold and hunger, the keenness of his sight, and his sense of locality. When you stand on the inland ice, this greatest of known glaciers, and behold the savage frozen wilderness which roars eternally while the ice splits and mountains are ground to powder beneath it, with hills and valleys, remarkable light-

Digitized by Google



STARTING FOR THE HUNTING GROUNDS.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

blue lakes, foaming cascades, and rivers at times disappearing with a roar as though they went to the very centre of the earth, you behold so many things which stir your imagination that you easily understand how it is that the natives have come to people their land with hostile spirits.

The most wonderful of Eskimo inventions is the kayak and its appurtenances. It is, at the same time, a dangerous craft in case of any accident. A foul line when the harpoon has struck an animal, a broken paddle, or a rent in the skin is enough to finish the occupant's life. That some one has been drowned in a kayak is such a general occurrence that it is almost considered natural, and the prospect of such an ending prevents no man from going to sea.

The most dangerous chase is that of the walrus. It is almost impossible for a single kayaker to kill one, therefore several follow when such are in sight, and during the encounter the Greenlanders show decided courage. When we hear of cold weather, during which kayakers are driven by the ice, cast away by the storm, and thrown upon a rock, where they wander about in the long night, hungry and exhausted, trying to conquer the sleep which they know is followed by certain death, then we get an idea of what a man can endure.

The Greenlanders have not a great variety of materials at their disposal, either for dress or implements; it must therefore be admitted that they show great ingenuity in making use of what there is at hand, and that they display much skill and

Digitized by Google

taste in their work. The embroidered strips in front of the legs of the women conceal the want of grace in those limbs, and the embroidery on the boots sets forth the elegance of their ankles. The fur round the neck and hands is often most choice, and gives a rich appearance to the entire person.

What gave me much pleasure, while staying among the Greenlanders, was their vocal performances. Scarcely an air is sung in Denmark to which they had not attached words of their own. With a quick ear, they pick up whatever melody they hear, and some of the melodious Swedish airs are, above all others, their favourites. When one starts, the rest of the company fall in with their clear and pure voices, each taking the part which suits him or her best, and a quartette is formed without hesitation, and without the singers having had other musical education than that which they have picked up from the organ in the church or from the pianos of the Danish ladies.

No part of the world enjoys the boon of perfect happiness. Life is a struggle in civilized lands as well as in the uttermost parts of the earth, and will probably always remain so. The explanation of the fact that the scanty population of Greenland live miserably, and suffer privations year by year, must to a large extent be sought for in their own improvidence and disregard for personal comfort. Greenlanders have not learnt to save when there is plenty, and in Greenland there is, contrary to what prevails in many other countries, either plenty or nothing. It is in more than one sense a land of extremes. Thus,

Digitized by Google

when light appears, it remains light both night and day, while in the winter, again, it is necessary to keep the lamp always alight. Again, when animals and birds arrive, they never come singly but in flocks, and each species has its own season and locality. In strolling among the hills, we either find them so devoid of living beings that we are struck by the desolation, or we meet with such an abundance of animal life that we are almost unable to recognize the same country.

This glorious land inspires an admiration, part of which naturally falls to the nation developed under these skies; but with the best will, and while admitting their many good qualities, we are unable to close our eyes to their various defects. The population of North Greenland is half of Scandinavian extraction, but their ideas differ very little from those of such of our fellow-men as we have been pleased to term savages, and their power of resistance to civilization is probably not much less than that of the aborigines or Indians, in spite of Denmark having tried to educate them during a century and a half.

To a superficial observer it is incomprehensible that European ideas should not have had the least influence on the inhabitants, seeing that many of their means of support—for instance, the important seal-catching by nets, the shark and halibut fishery, etc.—are of European origin. On closer examination we discover that here, as in other parts, where the language is not sufficiently rich or flexible to express foreign ideas, progress is impossible; the

Digitized by Google

Eskimo language being of a singularly conservative nature, and having by artificial means been kept away from any influence by the Scandinavian language. Greenlanders have never desired a written language, nor has a single one assisted in its construction; but Danes have invented and are constantly inventing new words, which are taught to the Greenlanders, and also new letters. While we might suppose that the Scandinavian language was the one by which the Eskimo had to be influenced, as most communication is with Denmark, we perceive that the latter entirely depends on its own resources, and that it has been made next to impossible for Greenlanders to learn Danish, or for Danes to learn Eskimo. When Greenlanders, who could not well count beyond five in their own language, had picked up the Danish numbers, and very soon showed that they were apt scholars, some one went to work and constructed new Eskimo terms, which, however, the Greenlanders have refused to adopt. As another example, it has been said that two modern translators of the Bible disagreed about the word devil. *Devele* had been a somewhat usual expression among the natives. One thought it might do, while the other protested, because it had a smack of Danish. However foolish such conduct may be, it is characteristic of the principles adopted by the teachers of the Eskimos.

This struggle to form a pure language, in order to uphold the original spirit of the natives, originated with the mission, undoubtedly from the best intentions and pure humanity, as well as from scien-

Digitized by Google

tific curiosity; but it is a great question if it will lead to anything but the final destruction of the nation, and, in such a case, to the very opposite of what was intended. It is always doubtful if an undesired gift is of value. Intelligent Greenlanders feel how powerless they are with their own language. This feeling I heard expressed by a native in the following words:—"Egede has done us much good, and we have much to thank him for, but he should have taught us Danish at once; then things would have looked different in Greenland to-day."

Ideas follow language as bodily health is followed by courage and energy. As long as the Greenlander remains an Eskimo, he will never learn to keep cattle, cultivate turnips, develop his fisheries, preserve the eider-ducks on his islands, trade with foreigners, or at all conceive ideas for himself. All improvements are executed for him, and he will very likely always require some one to lead him.

He is kept under a monopoly trade, which, it must be admitted, is a necessary evil in his present state of culture, but to say that he feels content with it would not be correct. Be the monopoly trade ever so fatherly—which it is said to be in this case—those who have to pay for it will naturally think it selfish. During the time that Denmark has possessed Greenland, the population has by frequent intermarriages become so crossed that Scandinavian are as frequently met with as Eskimo faces, and if young Danish mechanics continue to settle there for

Digitized by Google

another hundred and fifty years, there will probably be no traces of Eskimo origin left. Then the world may witness that Denmark, out of humanity, and admiration for something strange and scientifically interesting, has sunk a population of Scandinavians to the average level of Eskimos and Indians. Instead of encouraging the nation to learn the Scandinavian language, and thereby to obtain civilized ideas, and be enabled to think and feel with Iceland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, all endeavours are made to prevent it from doing so, and even from adopting foreign terms.

As far as names are concerned, the Greenlanders have unquestionably been incorporated with the Scandinavian nations. There the missionaries, with the exception of the Moravians in the two southerly stations, have mercilessly baptized them with pure Danish names, as Sören, Olsen, Jens, Larsen, etc., but have at the same time left them powerless to pronounce them. The Greenlanders themselves have, as one may guess, not made the least effort to preserve that portion of their nationality which is contained in their original names.

The Eskimo language is rich in terms for catching seals from a kayak, but is, beyond that, very poor and incapable of clothing foreign ideas in words. Some words have naturally crept into it, with the appendix *mik*, as coffeemik, snapsmik; while others have been corrupted, as "priest" to "palasay," soldier to "sakodo," etc.

Christianity and communication with Europeans have modified what Greenlanders once possessed of

Digitized by Google

barbarity. Remains of their ancient superstitions can naturally be traced, but Europeans, as a rule, have very little knowledge of them, as the natives seek to avoid our displeasure. As far as their eyes have been able to guide them, they try to imitate the Europeans. Thus parts of their dress are modernized, and you sometimes see that an entire European suit, if ever so poor, is the pride of the possessor; and the richer people among them often decorate their rooms with whatever photographs and prints they can get.

My first impressions of the country and life of its inhabitants were that Scandinavians or others of the European families could not exist there, because their bodies could not endure the hardships to which the natives are exposed; but, after having seen what children of Danes were capable of in that respect, I am inclined to believe that they often surpass the Eskimos. At all events, a nation with a sense of thrift and order would not, in that country, be compelled to expose itself to want of food and necessary clothing, and the horrible cases of frostbite and starvation would not occur. It has been asserted that none but Eskimos were able to catch seals, yet we have instances of Danes who, coming to Greenland as adults, are among the hunters and kayakers.

On the 19th of September an express came from Akugdlet, announcing that Nansen had not arrived, and on the 20th we made sail and left the harbour. It was not the sort of voyage one is accustomed to in these days of steamers and fresh provisions, and

Digitized by Google

it brought the tales of life on the ocean wave in past times back to my mind. The peculiar type of those regular Greenland traders who spend most of their summers on the Atlantic, staying at home cultivating their fields in the winter, is one with which I had but very few ideas in common, and day followed day with a monotony only interrupted a few times. We spent three weeks beating up against the wind in Davis's Strait, while the nights were rapidly lengthening, and storm followed storm. We kept to the west as much as possible, finding the water there remarkably warm, with very few icebergs, but twice the south-west gales threatened to drive us into the Godthaab fjord, where we should have been obliged to have remained all the winter. Having reached the Atlantic, two weeks brought us to the North Sea, which was crossed in two days as far as bringing us in sight of the cliffs of Norway, when fresh gales sprang up, and kept sweeping us from Norway to Scotland and back again. For a long time we could take no observation, and sounding in the northern portion of the North Sea being somewhat confusing, we were unable to tell where we were. One night, while we were hove-to in an easterly gale, the mate came down and announced that we must prepare ourselves for death, as we were fast drifting on to the coast of Scotland. A light was in sight to leeward, and we should be on the rocks in another hour. I turned out of my bunk and dressed myself, while the most different thoughts rushed through my mind in rapid succession, asking and replying to ques-

Digitized by Google

tions. "My poor pictures, they will all be dashed to pieces, and perhaps be picked up by a Scotch fisherman who will look on them as of little value;" while another whispered, "We are not wrecked yet. We must find out what light it is, and there will surely be a chance of some kind." Feeling my hand shake, one thought rebuked me most: "What nonsense! You did not give yourself life, and you do not take it. What is there in death to be afraid of? It is like having a door opened, and passing from one room into another." But still the hand would not be as steady as usual when buttoning my clothes in the dark cabin. "Who is frightened to death should be buried in the gutter," said one little sarcastic fellow; and a lofty one condescended to remark, "You are miserable because you are going to be drowned, and would prefer rock enough to put your foot on and to remain there for ever. If you would exercise the small amount of reason which the Almighty has bestowed upon you, you might understand that, as long as nobody misses you, you may be happy wherever you go, and you will know that there are thousands on shore who are really miserable and would gladly exchange with you at this moment, fool that you are."

I came on deck and found the mate making more sail. "We must press by if possible; it is our only chance," said he. It was a fixed light. I went below to look at the chart, and found that it might be the Kennaird Head. There were two fellow-passengers, the outposter and his Eskimo wife. He, apparently, was not far from fainting,

Digitized by Google

while she, brave woman, was reading her Bible. I did my best to encourage them, and came on deck again. Sail had been made in the mean time, and the *Peru* begun consequently to ship mountains of water, which would soon have swept her decks. The light had neared us so rapidly that I began to suspect it of being a steamer, but felt disinclined to say so before I was sure. The same idea had evidently occurred to the second mate, who stood silently watching it with a spyglass, until both of us called out, "Red side light," and the foresail was clewed up again. I went below and told the good news, but then the strength of the Greenlander gave out, and she fainted. When I turned in again, it was with a much lighter heart that I lay down and thought, "How fortunate it is only an ordinary storm!"

November in the North Sea is never very comfortable. That November closed the eyes of many a brave fellow, as we could see from the wrecks which we encountered. We saw Norwegian barques with deck cargoes half-way up their lower masts, and we could recognize the broken fragments of them when the gale was over. The Greenland trade has an idea that slow vessels are the cheapest, but it also believes in strong vessels, and we had nothing to fear from the *Peru* as long as she had water under her keel. I have never thought my native land prettier than when I finally saw the sandhills of the Scaw. "Never call the *Peru* a slow boat," exclaimed the skipper, who believed her to be the finest boat in existence. Whether she,

Digitized by Google

like a dog, had smelt her native land and the train-oil dock in Copenhagen—which latter is not always a difficult matter—and made haste for it, or whether her flat bows only required smooth water to be equal in speed to other vessels, I am unable to say. She certainly did get over the ground in her run down the Kattegat at a great pace, leaving all competitors in the race far behind.

We took a pilot on board off Elsinore, and were not a little surprised at the first words he spoke: "Nansen has successfully crossed, and winters in Godthaab."

On the 20th of November, 1884, we anchored in the roads of Copenhagen, and with our arrival my story comes to an end.

FURLING THE SAILS.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE BORROWER WILL BE CHARGED AN OVERDUE FEE IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW. NON-RECEIPT OF OVERDUE NOTICES DOES NOT EXEMPT THE BORROWER FROM OVERDUE FEES.

CANCELLED
BOOK DUE
NOV 4 1983
AUG 2 4 1983
7865025

Digitized by Google

Two summers in Greenland :
Widener Library 004343510
3 2044 082 189 648

Digitized by Google